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ABSTRACT

Each year staff members in the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Division of School Improvement, conduct onsite visits to each of the most improved schools, K-12, as identified by the ABCs of Public Education. Using a structured-interview process, staff members talk with administrators and teachers to determine what strategies and/or programs contributed to the growth/gains of their students. This publication documents the results of those interviews during the 1999-2000 school year and shares information for all schools to consider implementing. This year's document includes more extensive demographic information to assist schools in matching strategies and/or programs to their environment. As in past years, the interviews addressed the critical areas of school improvement: leadership; parent involvement; curriculum and instruction; professional development; and school climate. To share additional information about implementation of two current educational initiatives, the document also addresses strategies for understanding and preparing the student accountability standards and closing the achievement gaps. The 35 schools featured have identified and successfully implemented strategies that result in improved student achievement. Educators are encouraged to use this document as a resource for school improvement and as a networking guide to learn from schools that are successful in documenting student growth. (Author/WFA)

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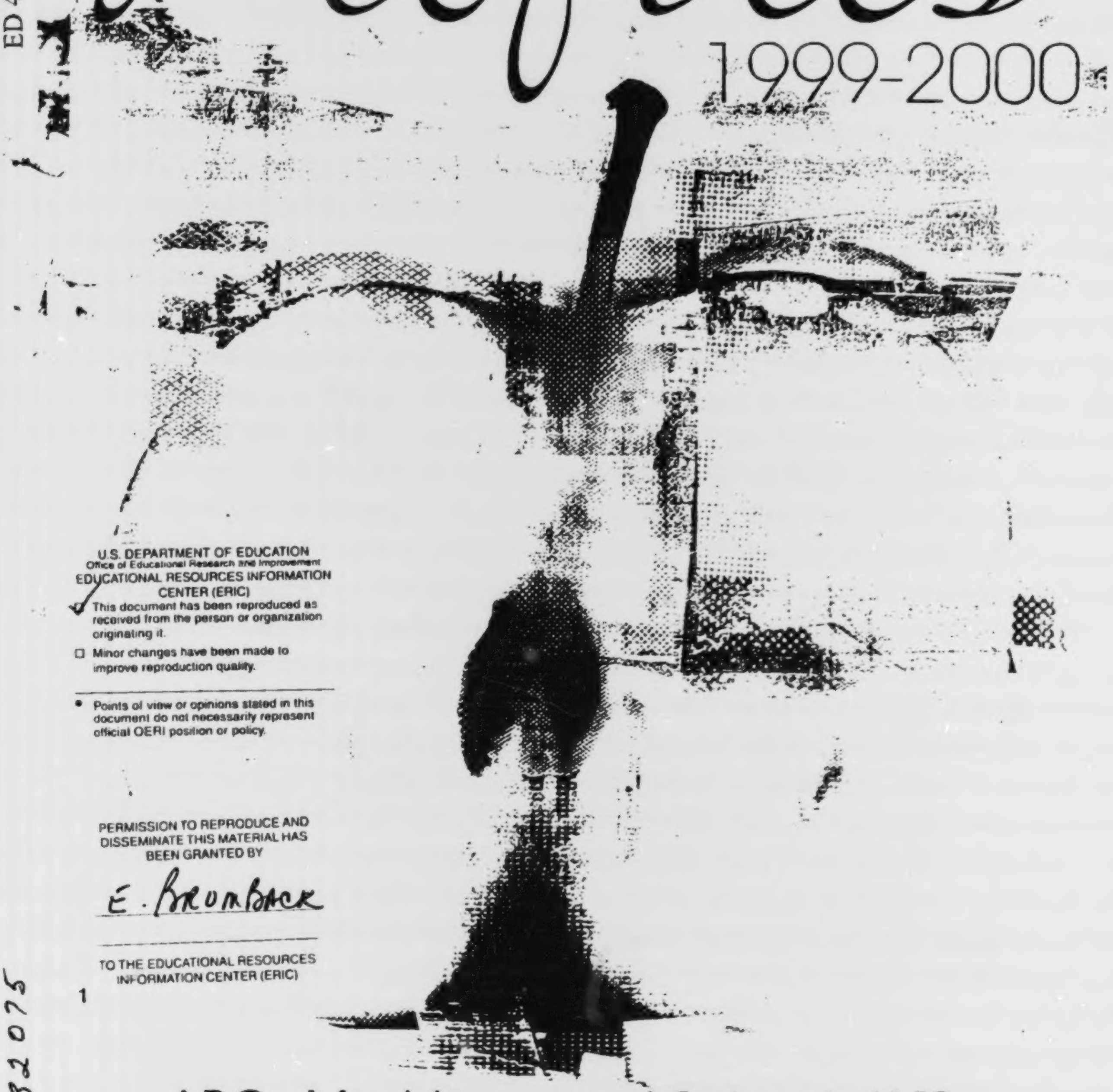
Profiles

1999-2000



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ABCs Most Improved Schools K-12

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Introduction

Each year, staff in the Division of School Improvement conduct on-site visits to each of the *Most Improved* schools, K-12, as identified by the ABCs of Public Education. Using a structured interview process, staff talked with administrators and teachers to determine what strategies and/or programs contributed to the growth/gains of their students. This publication documents the results of those interviews and shares information for all schools to consider implementing. It is important to remember, however, that replication is not automatic, but should be adopted or adapted to meet a school's unique needs and population. This year's document includes more extensive demographic information to assist schools in matching strategies and/or programs to their environment.

As in past years, the interviews addressed the critical areas of school improvement:

- ☑ Leadership,
- ☑ Parent involvement,
- ☑ Curriculum and instruction,
- ☑ Professional development, and
- ☑ School climate.

To share additional information about implementation of two current educational initiatives, the document also addresses strategies for understanding and preparing the student accountability standards and closing the achievement gap.

The schools featured have identified and successfully implemented strategies that result in improved student achievement. Educators are encouraged to use this document as a resource for school improvement and as a networking guide to learn from schools that are successful in documenting student growth.

Most Improved Schools
K-8

ACADEMY HEIGHTS YEAR-ROUND SCHOOL

Lincoln Road
Pinehurst, North Carolina 28374
919.295.8338

Moore County Schools
Partick J. Russo, Superintendent
Janice Mann, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Rural
Grade span at the school	K-5
Number of certified staff members	21
Number of classified staff members	8
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:27
Student attendance rate	96.6%
Attendance rate of faculty	High
Number of teachers new to this school last year	1
Teacher turnover rate	1

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/ Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
K	39	African-American	5	1.9%
1	50	Asian	2	.7%
2	51	Caucasian	253	96.5%
3	44	Hispanic	2	.7%
4	42	Native American		
5	36	Other		

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	44	17%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	1	10%
Asian		
Caucasian	11	90%
Hispanic		
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	2	6	13		

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Principal	Three parents
Five teachers	Two teacher assistants

Leadership

The principal was an elementary teacher for 7 years and was elected Teacher-of-the-Year in her LEA in 1985-86. She has been a principal for 15 years, 13 of which have been spent at Academy Heights. She was named Moore County Principal-of-the-Year for the 2000-2001 school year.

The principal, teachers, and other staff members work, plan, problem solve and play together as a team. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect between and among staff members and they share a common goal of success for all students. Leadership responsibilities are shared by the principal and the school improvement team, which meets for a minimum of three full-days per year.

The principal believes that the school's most important goal is to provide the best instructional program possible and to hold high expectations for staff and students. To support teachers, she disaggregated test data to identify students' strengths and needs; mentored new teachers; monitored daily lesson plans and classroom instruction; provided immediate feedback to teachers; strongly encouraged parental involvement; provided needs-based staff development; met with students, individually and in groups; and assigned staff and modifies the instructional program/day to provide intensive instruction and monitor students' progress.

Parent Involvement

On-going communication with parents is considered essential and parents receive newsletters, telephone calls, home visits, parent conferences, a student handbook, and regular feedback from the teacher on how their child is progressing. The principal checked the tardy/absence list each day and made a personal call to parents to discuss their child's situation. Parents were made to feel welcome at school and their participation in school activities and their child's education is a high priority for the school staff.

Academy Heights was the only elementary, year-round, school of choice in Moore County. Many professional and well-educated parents elected to send their child to the school even though some of the students must ride the school bus for extended distances, or be driven to school by their parents. Parents chose the school despite the fact that the main classroom building dates from the 1930's, with many of the space and maintenance issues commensurate with a building this age, and located in a rural, middle-to-low income neighborhood. They chose it, over a newer and sometimes more convenient elementary school, because they believe in the year-round program, the principal and teachers, and what they knew the school was providing for their children. The school had the highest attendance rate of any school in the system.

Parents show their support by volunteering in large numbers at the school; providing funding for various school needs, programs and initiatives; assisting with playground construction and maintenance; participating in the PTO; donating materials, supplies and equipment; and in numerous other ways, which recognize the school staff and students for "a job well-done". The majority of school events and activities enjoy a 95 to 100% participation rate by parents. The principal and teachers struggle to find sufficient accolades to describe the time, and the financial and emotional support, provided to the school by "their parents".

Pinehurst Resort and County Club and the Moore County Regional Hospital were business partners with the school. They also provided tutors, volunteers and financial support for the school.

Curriculum and Instruction

The school has been a year-round, school of choice for four years. Prior to adopting the year-round program, Academy Heights had been a traditional K-3 school with over 400 students. It is currently the only year-round elementary school in Moore County; 30% of the student population qualifies for the Academically Gifted program; 3% are classified as LD or EMD; 17% are on free or reduced lunch; less than five-percent of the students are racial or ethnic minorities; and, 87% of all students are proficient in reading and math. Writing scores were lower, but above the state average. The school has high expectations for all students and the school's stated goal was for 90% or more of students to become proficient in all tested areas by the end of the school year.

Test scores were disaggregated for each child by the principal and given to teachers prior to the beginning of the school year. The principal conferenced with teachers, individually and by grade-level, to discuss the scores and to plan the instructional program/day for each classroom. Classrooms were visited daily and progress is monitored every two weeks by the principal. Teachers were required to teach language arts for a minimum of two hours per day and math for 90 minutes per day. Writing, reading and math skills were integrated across all subject areas. Teachers at each grade level worked together on a daily basis to plan instruction for their classes, and time was made available, on at least a monthly basis, for teachers across grade levels to meet and plan. The school system provided pacing guides for each grade level. Teachers were given the opportunity to discuss new concepts and to visit other schools to see programs/instructional strategies in action.

Teachers wishing to implement new or innovative practices in their classrooms had the opportunity to write grants and, if approved, received up to $1,000 from the PTA to implement the program. Teachers assigned homework at least four nights per week at each grade level and students were expected to complete some projects during the weekends. Parents signed their child's homework, teachers checked assignments, and feedback was provided to students.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

To prepare students for the end-of-grade tests, teachers taught the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study,* used testlets, *Accelerated Reader, Competitive Edge, Blast Off, Sharpen Up and Test Magic.* Teachers also scheduled the school day to make maximum use of instructional time and used the end-of-grade test format to design their own tests. Released forms of the reading and math tests were administered once a year.

Parents and students were given written information about State Accountability Standards, end-of-grade testing, promotion standards, and expectations of students. This information was reinforced in parent conferences, at PTA meetings, and by the principal and teachers talking with students.

Closing the Achievement Gap

To assist fourth- and fifth-grade students working below grade level, the school provided a year-long, after-school tutoring program two-days per week from 2:30 p.m.-5:00 p.m. The school counselor and the physical education teacher were scheduled into the fifth-grade math block for an hour and a half each day to assist students and monitor progress. All grade-levels participated in the Guided Reading Program for the entire school year for at least 90 minutes per day. Teacher assistants were shared with the 4th and 5th grade classroom from 8:30a.m.-10:00 a.m. each day to assist with the Guided Reading Program for 6-8 weeks prior to the end of grade testing. Reading, writing and math skills were integrated into all subject areas, including art and music. All teachers maintained portfolios on themselves, their students, and their instructional program. Parent and business partner volunteers worked at all grade levels to assist with academic achievement and to mentor students.

During the three-week intersessions, the school provided childcare from 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. for any child who wished to participate. The school also provided an enrichment camp from 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. for one week, and a remediation camp that was offered twice a year during the last week of the intersessions from 8:00a.m.-12:00 p.m. Students experiencing academic difficulty were strongly encouraged to attend the remediation camps.

Professional Development

Staff development was needs driven and provided in content areas identified by the school administrators and teachers. Technology, math, writing and language arts workshops are offered each year. Teachers were encouraged to make on-site visits to other schools to preview instructional strategies and programs.

School Climate

The principal and school staff described themselves as a warm and dedicated family with a common goal of becoming a School of Excellence. They exuded a well-earned sense of pride and joy in their work and in their accomplishments. The staff felt that they and the students have earned their reputation as a school, which is leading the way, and as one that makes the difficult possible. The staff celebrated together, worked as a team, engages in friendly competition, and believed that they made a difference in the lives of children.

BEAUFORT COUNTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

150 Swamp Road
Pantego, North Carolina 27860
252.943.2825

Beaufort County Schools
George Stancil, Superintendent
M.E. "Bubs" Carson, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Rural
Grade span at the school	PreK-5
Number of certified staff members	27
Number of classified staff members	23
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:18
Student attendance rate	96%
Attendance rate of faculty	97%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	1
Teacher turnover rate	4%

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
K	74	African-American	129	46%
1	78	Asian		
2	37	Caucasian	159	57%
3	32	Hispanic	30	11%
4	28	Native American		
5	32	Other	3	1%

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	281	64%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	2	8%
Asian		
Caucasian	23	88%
Hispanic	1	4%
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	3	9	3	3	8

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Three teachers	Two parents

Leadership

The principal, with former junior high and high school experience, exhibited excellent leadership skills. He believed in site-based management and exhibits this through actively listening to the staff and valuing their input. He utilized a team-oriented leadership approach. He believed that the school is a learning community and that the resiliency that students exhibit needs to be recognized and fostered. The principal is highly visible during the day. He had high expectations of the staff, students, and the parents.

Parent Involvement

Parents were actively involved in the school in several ways. Parents volunteer on a daily basis. Parents also gave materials and other resources to the school. Parents trusted the principal and the teachers to do what is best for the students at Beaufort County Elementary School.

Curriculum and Instruction

The *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* was strictly followed *to prepare students for the end-of-grade tests. Writing was stressed across all subjects.*

Data analysis was conducted at the beginning of the year to determine which students scored at Levels I and II on the end-of-grade tests. From this data analysis, the staff determined their instructional focus for the year. In addition to the focus on reading, writing, and mathematics, integrated all subject areas, and test-taking skills were taught. This was particularly useful for third grade students who had never taken standardized tests.

The teachers utilized math pacing guides at all grade levels. Bi-weekly testing of math goals was an instructional and assessment strategy utilized by the teachers. The *North Carolina Reading Coach* and *Blast Off* were used as instructional tools. The *Accelerated Reader* program was also utilized at the school.

There were two *Reading Recovery* teachers at the school who worked with first grade students who had difficulty learning to read.

The staff had high expectations for all students and worked with all students to ensure their academic and emotional growth.

Beaufort County Elementary School had a third through fifth grade after-school tutoring program that focused on reading strategies The school also sponsored a Super Saturday in which teachers focused on reading and test-taking strategies. The students also enjoyed a hot dog cookout sponsored by the principal.

Students who scored at Levels III and IV are expected to maintain and improve these achievement levels. Students were given special projects and enrichment activities. Critical thinking skills and exposure to real life situations that involve higher level thinking were emphasized. Students who scored at the lower end of the Level III scale score range were focused on particularly so that they would maintain or increase their performance.

There was an emphasis on integrating all subject areas in all grade levels. The teachers emphasized to students the importance of all subjects. Students participated in engaging, integrated activities at all grade levels.

Teachers worked together to increase student achievement. There is only a small percentage of teacher turnover in the school. The teachers planned together on grade levels on a weekly basis. The school improvement team was a strong voice in the school. They meet formally and informally to make decisions that would best met the needs of the students.

The teachers met across grade levels to discuss the North Carolina Standard Course of Study objectives. Teachers knew what objectives students were expected to master at their grade level and the next grade level.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

The principal and staff explained the student accountability standards to parents during parent meetings, parent conferences, and individual conferences with students. The accountability standards, by grade level, were published by the school and sent home with all students. The principal and teachers positively communicated the accountability standards to parents and assured parents that all necessary interventions would take place so that students would be successful in school.

Closing the Achievement Gap

The staff was aware that an achievement gap existed between minority and white students. After careful data analysis, the staff developed specific strategies that would aid in closing the achievement gap. The strategies included one-on-one tutoring, peer tutoring, diversity training for teachers, and counseling sessions for students who were failing.

Professional Development

Teachers participated in professional development activities that focused on reading, writing, assessment, student accountability standards, math, data analysis, computer technology, and *Accelerated Reader*. Professional development activities were planned by the school improvement team from data analysis of end-of-grade test scores, results of teacher surveys, and state and local education agency initiatives.

School Climate

All staff members exhibited high expectations regarding student performance and behavior. Teachers helped each other when discipline problems arose. All students and parents were provided with school handbooks that explained academic and behavior expectations. The motto "Things go better when everyone works together" was verbalized throughout the school. Character Education is an integral part of the curriculum. The custodians kept the school clean and safe. Parents were supportive of the teachers in all areas, particularly discipline. The parents trusted the staff to do what is best for their children. There were no incidents of school violence reported for the school.

BOONVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

P.O. Box 129
Boonville, North Carolina 27011
336.367.7021

Yadkin County Schools
Barbara Todd, Superintendent
Alice Shore, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Rural
Grade span at the school	K-8
Number of certified staff members	36 full-time, 7 part-time
Number of classified staff members	25
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:23
Student attendance rate	97%
Attendance rate of faculty	99%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	3
Teacher turnover rate	8%

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
K	63	African-American	29	5.5%
1	70	Asian		
2	60	Caucasian	471	89.7%
3	52	Hispanic	22	4.2%
4	48	Other	4	.8%
5	61			
6	50			
7	65			
8	59			

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	178	34.9%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	1	.03%
Asian		
Caucasian	33	99.9%
Hispanic		
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	5	9	4	2	14

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Fourth grade teacher	Kindergarten teacher
Fifth grade teacher	Third grade teacher
Speech therapist	

Leadership

The principal was no stranger to Boonville Elementary School. She has served as principal of the school for the past three years, and for 14 years prior to that, she served as an assistant principal in the same school. The principal sees herself as a strong instructional leader as does the staff at the school. She was respected as a caring partner in the education endeavors of the students at the school. Leadership responsibilities were shared with other building administrators and the school improvement team. She had a veteran staff, and the school will see many teachers retiring within the next five years. Staff development opportunities were needs-driven: classroom management for new staff, and data-driven instruction for all staff. Instruction was monitored by checking lesson plans, monitoring classrooms, reviewing assessment data, and talking with students and parents.

Parent Involvement

Many of the teachers indicated parent involvement was moderately high at the school. Parents supported school sports, band activities, the PTA, and special projects. Parents also supported the school by attending meetings and serving as volunteers in grades K-3 and as parent volunteers for *Project WINGS* in Kindergarten. Most parents also attended the Parent Night held before the beginning of school so they could meet the teachers of their children.

Curriculum and Instruction

Grade-level meetings were held weekly, and cross grade-level meetings were held monthly. All teachers supported the curriculum area and tested subjects. Writing Across the Curriculum activities were integrated in all subject areas including science, social studies, and physical education. Teachers also indicated math skills and objectives were particularly emphasized in science and social studies classes. Meeting the needs of all students was accomplished by after-school tutoring programs, daily one-on-one acceleration with at-risk students, sharing teacher assistants with teachers beyond grades K-3, and the buddy program where upper grade students were paired with younger students in grades K-3.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

The school prepared the parents for the new accountability standards by devoting an entire PTA meeting to the topic. A special parent night was also held, and brochures were prepared and distributed explaining the new standards.

Professional Development

The staff indicated the staff development offered to them was adequate considering the funds available to them in a small school system. Participants in staff development were expected to share information with others at grade level and cross grade-level meetings. Staff development priories last year included computer training, writing, thinking maps, and character education.

School Climate

The staff described themselves as cohesive, energetic and caring. This was not the case in the past they explained. In the past when their test scores were reported as the lowest in the county, they first became angry and hurt. After the grieving process, the school administrators, faculty, and staff decided their school did not have the students, characteristics, or traits which warranted their low-performing status. They were determined to make Boonville Elementary School the best school in Yadkin County. Through determination, teamwork, and effective communication they saw their students rise to their higher expectations. The entire school community, tired of complacency, set priorities, pooled together resources, and rallied to make the students at the school soar.

BULADEAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

RR 2 Hwy 221
Bakersville, North Carolina 28705-9802
828.688.2324

Mitchell County Public Schools
Superintendent: Mr. Roger Dale Duncan
Principal: Mr. Phillip Elliott

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Rural
Grade span at the school	K-8
Number of certified staff members	8
Number of classified staff members	4
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:15
Student attendance rate	93%
Attendance rate of faculty	Excellent
Number of teachers new to school last year	
Teacher turnover rate	

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
K-8	127	Caucasian	127	100%

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	104	82%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
Caucasian	8	100%

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty years of Experience	1	3	0	2	2

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

All faculty serve on team.

Leadership

The principal, who taught in a K-8 school for 21 years before becoming principal of Buladean five years ago, saw his major responsibility knowing the curriculum for all grades in his school and helping teachers deliver instruction in the best way possible. Teachers see him performing this function. He gave teachers the liberty to try new things with a focus beyond just test scores. Enrichment was allowed and encouraged for all students. Teachers spoke of developing both sides of the students' brains. Were he given the opportunity, he would divide the only combination grade in his school and have an assistant in every classroom. The school improvement team, made up of every teacher, shared in budgetary and hiring decisions, especially for teacher assistant positions.

Parent Involvement

Parents were involved in extra-curricular activities, sports and seasonal festivals, but left academics to the school. Parents have not yet taken invitations, given frequently from the school, to help at home in preparing students for testing and academics. Gateways have not registered yet for them. The parents disciplined their children and taught them to respect the school and authority in general, but, so far, do not believe there will be consequences for poor academic achievement. At the primary level, parents help and come when called, but, of course, their input into academics was not required in those grades in the same way as in higher grades.

Curriculum and Instruction

Keeping the Level III and IV students involved and growing was almost as big a task as bringing up the Level I and II students, staff reported. Teachers must be able to "ride two horses at one time," in order to accomplish these tasks in the same classroom. Challenging software, such as *Carmen San Diego*, helped. The Special Education teacher, also a botanist and nature studies expert, enriches instruction for all students. Innovative ways of teaching were used throughout the school. For example, after a field trip to a pottery, students were led to compare the pottery-making process to the geological process. Science and social studies were not ignored. Reading classes used material from these subjects regularly. Teachers believed that instruction in these subjects improves performance on tests.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

All parent meetings and gatherings were seen as opportunities to tell about the standards and the Gateways. Teachers created a K-8 syllabus coordinated to the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* using Learn NC. Parents got a copy of this syllabus so they can see the full K-8 curriculum. Third graders are told they "are like the big kids now," and have to take pre-tests. But, to avoid overkill, teachers typically waited until January to show students anything that looks like a standardized test. In the past, students have reacted with very high stress levels from being over-prepared, a phenomenon coaches call peaking too soon. Students practiced and were told that school is not over until the end-of-grade tests. Teachers followed objectives carefully and taught them all year long.

Professional Development

School staff members reported multiple sources of information and in-service training in their professional expectations. The administrative conference held in Boone annually as well as information sent from Raleigh, the ABCs handbooks and the Internet were all cited as useful. The current superintendent was seen as an instructional leader and kept in touch with teachers' classroom needs. The central office provided curriculum and instruction assistance through consultants who help teachers meet the needs of students at all levels as well as instructional in technology. The Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) staff had an impact, as well. Teachers specifically cited as helpful workshops taught by "real teachers who are really doing the activities and can say they really work."

School Climate

The building has been refurbished in the current principal's five-year tenure. All new floors, ceilings, doors, paint and an emphasis on aesthetics have provided an atmosphere where teachers and students can enjoy and feel welcome. The principal asked himself, "Do I want to learn here?" as he imagines himself a student. He believed the school was working to approach that criterion. The principal adheres to the Safe Schools guidelines and used an strategy called "Risk Watch" to protect kids from the most common threats to their safety and well-being. Rules are posted in the school and new rules are discussed in teachers' meetings and then in every classroom. The principal also reviewed them on the intercom. At the primary level, teachers used huge amounts of patience. There was no yelling or screaming. Rules and behaviors were very carefully taught. All teachers in this school believed that students must know the curriculum but before that happens, they will be hugged and loved. Academic achievement was secondary to love at Buladean.

CENTRAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PO Box 38
504 Shortcut Road
Maple, North Carolina 27956
(252) 453-0010

Currituck County Schools
William L. Dobney, Superintendent
Maruice "Buck" Green, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Rural
Grade span at the school	K-6
Number of certified staff members	25.2
Number of classified staff members	20.5
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:17
Student attendance rate	95.3%
Attendance rate of faculty	90.1%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	2.5
Teacher turnover rate	234

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
K	28	African-American	52	22%
1	34	Asian	1	1%
2	25	Caucasian	174	74%
3	36	Hispanic	3	1%
4	29	Native American	1	1%
5	41	Other	3	1%
6	41			

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	92	39.3%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	2	8%
Asian		
Caucasian	23	92%
Hispanic		
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	1	13.7	1	1.5	8

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Fifth grade teacher	Assistant principal
Kindergarten teacher	Three parents
Resource teacher	Teacher assistant
Sixth Grade teacher	Principal

Leadership

Central Elementary School's principal, Mr. "Buck" Green, is a highly experienced educator who was quick to share credit for the outstanding success of his school with his co-workers. He referred to the faculty and staff as "very intelligent problem solvers who work well together." Mr. Green was a teacher, coach, program director, assistant principal, and middle school principal before he came to Central Elementary as principal six years ago. His experience was apparent in the way he set high expectations for all, clearly communicated those expectations to everyone, and structured the school environment in such a way that the high expectations were met.

The principal was a listener, observer, facilitator, decision-maker, goal-setter, resource-provider, and school patriarch. He was also very aware of what teachers were supposed to be teaching and what was going on in classrooms. He was visible and accessible. Teachers expected him to "pop in" to their classrooms regularly. He left teachers alone to teach when they were doing a good job and made sure there were few interruptions to the instructional day.

Under the strong leadership of Mr. Green, the assistant principal was delegated some of the responsibility for curriculum and instruction. Her role was much like that of a curriculum coordinator. She was highly involved in the hands-on issues of scheduling, instructional planning, curriculum alignment and vertical articulation. Both administrators shared responsibility for monitoring and evaluating performance. The faculty and staff looked to both and principal and the assistant principal for different kinds of valuable educational leadership.

Parent Involvement

Along with serving on the school improvement team, parents were involved in a variety of ways. Parent volunteers assisted teachers with photocopying, making instructional games and other teaching-learning materials, reading to children and listening to children read, putting up bulletin boards, and displaying student work. The school had a friendly, open-door policy which encouraged parents and grandparents to come often for lunch and feel free to observe or participate in classes. PTA Open House was well attended and parents stayed late after the scheduled time talking to teachers and enjoying their school. Telephones in all the classrooms made it possible for parents and teachers to make contact quickly, both when there was a problem and when teachers wanted to share something positive about a student. Parents were also kept well informed by frequently receiving notes from the teachers in the students' homework booklets. The community and school worked cooperatively to implement the *Be a Buddy Program* for students identified as having few positive role models and the Title I teacher implemented *Partners in Print*.

Curriculum and Instruction

Two important components of the school's instructional program were strongly credited with helping improve student achievement. These components were *Learning Lab* and *Enrichment Block*. Groups of students left the regular classroom two or three days a week and went to *Learning Lab* for 40 minutes to receive extra help. Classroom teachers recommended the objectives to be covered and two teacher assistants worked in the lab to provide tutoring. To meet individual needs, students remaining in the classroom were organized into flexible groups to work on specific skills in content areas.

The *Enrichment Block* was a 40 minute period during every instructional day when no new information or skills were taught and regular classroom teachers provided on-going review and maintenance lessons. The goal for the *Enrichment Block* was for all "pull-outs" such as LD, AG, and BEH resource, Title I, and speech to be scheduled during this time so children participating in these programs would not miss the teaching of any new material. The administrators and teachers were all in agreement that these two programs coupled with before and after-school tutoring had a major positive impact on student performance.

The *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* was carefully paced and thoroughly taught. Nine-week practice tests were given to assess on-going progress and a North Carolina End-of-Grade Test - Released Form was administered after the middle of the year. Results from these tests were used to drive instruction. Students were also exposed to commercial resources such as *Test Magic*, *The Competitive Edge*, *NC Coach*, *Blast Off*, and *Sharpen Up*, which gave them further practice with the curriculum and the format of the end-of-grade test. *Accelerated Reader* and *Reading Renaissance* programs motivated students to read and were used to supplement the language arts instruction.

Teachers at the same grade level were given common planning time daily. They also planned together after school when necessary. An important component of their planning was completing a Weekly Planning Sheet designed to include a short summary of topics and objectives to be taught in all the academic areas. Language arts, mathematics, computer, science, health and social studies were included on the form. The non-tested subject areas were not neglected as they were integrated into the language arts and mathematics curriculum and taught daily during their own instructional times. Special area teachers received copies of the Weekly Planning Sheets to keep them informed so their instruction would be pertinent and reinforcing.

Students scoring at or above grade level on end-of-grade tests were challenged through differentiated instruction in cluster groups. These students were exposed to new material rapidly and their curriculum was enriched with research projects, independent reading assignments, and opportunities for higher-level problem solving. Teachers who had been trained in strategies for teaching academically gifted children used these strategies in the regular classroom to meet the needs of academically accelerated students.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

Administrators and teachers believed implementing the *Student Accountability Standards* (Grades K-12) a year before they were required by the State had a great impact on improving student achievement at Central Elementary. This early implementation was required by the superintendent and was credited with the recent outstanding growth in Currituck County Schools. High expectations set by the superintendent seemed to naturally filter down to administrators, then to teachers, and finally to students.

Parents and students were required to participate in orientation sessions where they received copies of the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* and signed Student Accountability Agreements. Reading and signing these agreements helped parents recognize the importance of their part in their child's education and encouraged students to accept responsibility for their own learning.

The Student Accountability Agreements were said to be important tools for ensuring that all parties involved understood their accountability in the educational process. Parents signed pledges to support regular school attendance, ample study time at home, consistent communication, and attendance at parent/teacher conferences. Students signed the agreement saying they would do such things as respect themselves and others while at school, complete all assignments on time and to the best of their abilities, and ask questions when they didn't understand. Teachers were also required to sign a pledge to explain their expectations, instructional goals and grading system, provide a climate that was conducive to learning, and respect the cultural differences of the students.

As part of the Student Accountability Standards, a Personalized Education Plan was written for each at-risk student and discussed with the parents. These plans outlined intervention strategies that would be implemented to help students who needed extra assistance.

Closing the Achievement Gap

At Central Elementary the only cohort group of students identified and their achievement analyzed were the state-identified academically gifted students. This study may have more appropriately been deemed an attempt at "Closing the Growth Gap" rather than "Closing the Achievement Gap," since the group's achievement was already high. However, there was countywide concern about the lack of growth of academically gifted students in previous years compared to that of the rest of the school population.

Although no other cohort groups were identified and compared, teachers worked with every student on an individual basis and Personalized Education Plans ensured that at-risk students received assistance needed to meet academic standards.

Professional Development

Regularly scheduled grade-level meetings provided opportunity for professional development as teachers shared helpful resources and effective strategies. Other professional development included training in *Accelerated Reader*, *Accelerated Math*, and *Reading Renaissance*. Support from central office personnel was identified as professional development and included assistance with initially licensed teachers, exceptional children, and testing issues. The assistant superintendent in charge of curriculum and instruction worked directly with school-level curriculum coordinators and was considered a useful resource.

School Climate

Even a short stay at Central Elementary School revealed the warmth and friendliness of the environment. Teachers said the administrators were goal-oriented, yet supportive, both professionally and personally. The school worked together as a "tight-knit", productive team under strong leadership. Parents were glad the school was small enough for the principal and teachers to know everybody and called the climate "family-oriented." People appeared happy and felt appreciated for what they did. They spoke highly of others in the school. Everyone was willing to lend a helping hand and quick to give credit where they believed credit was due. They were proud of their students' accomplishments and looked forward to continuous improvement. One teacher summarized the school climate well when she said, "This school really doesn't need a teachers' lounge. Everyone is so busy giving 100% every minute of the day, there's no need for a place to just sit and talk."

EAST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

600 Cleveland Avenue
Kings Mountain, North Carolina 28086
704.734.5633

Kings Mountain District Schools
Robert R. McRae, Jr., Superintendent
Jerry D. Hoyle, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Urban
Grade span at the school	K-5
Number of certified staff members	21
Number of classified staff members	18
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1-18.4
Student attendance rate	96.97
Attendance rate of faculty	NA
Number of teachers new to this school last year	1
Teacher turnover rate	

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
K	53	African-American	80	24%
1	54	Asian		
2	57	Caucasian	235	71%
3	59	Hispanic	3	1%
4	54	Native American		
5	54	Other	13	4%

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	181	54.19%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	1	5%
Asian		
Caucasian	19	95%
Hispanic		
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	4	7	2	2	5

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Media specialist	Fifth grade teacher
Second grade teacher	Second grade teacher
First grade teacher	Three parents
Fourth grade teacher	Third grade teacher
Teacher assistant	

Leadership

The principal has been at East Elementary School for eight years. The school earned exemplary status for the past four years under his leadership. The staff expressed high regard for him. He was viewed as a coach and as one who was extremely thoughtful. He constantly offered encouragement and was a facilitator of instruction.

Mr. Hoyle encouraged stakeholders to believe that all students can learn. He frequently visited in the classrooms and gaves formal and informal feedback to the staff. He had high expectations for the entire staff and for all students. Strong support related to discipline was always present. The principal's door was always open.

Faculty and support staff met with the principal at the beginning of the school year to set expectations for the coming year and to review the school's mission. Additional faculty meetings were held each month to reflect on student learning and the effectiveness of teaching strategies as well as to plan for the future and discuss system wide and school wide issues.

Teachers participated in the decision-making process through the school improvement team. Parents and all staff members were provided opportunities and encouraged to participate in the process. Decisions related to the participation of all faculty in after school remediation, the purchase of walkie-talkies, play ground improvement and after school snacks.

Assistance to students and teachers was a vital part of ensuring student achievement. Students were monitored regularly while they completed assignments, and they have had the opportunity for re-teaching and re-testing when necessary. An active Communities in Schools program also supported achievement. An after-school remediation program focusing on reading and math conducted two days a week also provided opportunity for early intervention. Many programs contributed to the school's success. They included *Accelerated Reader, Saxon Math and Saxon Phonics, the Four-Block Literacy Model, Josten's Learning Lab,* CORE and a student awards program.

New teachers attended a one-week orientation provided by the district office at the beginning of the year. The principal assigned a mentor to all new teachers. Time was designated during the week for mentor/mentee meetings in the school setting. Mentors worked closely with their mentees during the year in order to provide assistance and support. Progress or concerns were reported to the principal.

Instruction was monitored frequently to ensure progress. New teachers were evaluated four times each year. Formal observations and many informal observations were conducted. The system-wide curriculum specialist made sure that new teachers had the current Standard Course of Study and the materials needed for instruction. Career teachers wrote alternative evaluation plans each year based on school wide and system wide goals for the year. These plans were reviewed periodically.

Parent Involvement

East Elementary School had an active Parent Teacher Organization. An Open House/PTO meeting was held at the beginning of year. Additional meetings were scheduled throughout the year. In addition to the regular meeting, parents were involved with students through conferences with teachers in the first semester. The PTO conducted a Fall Carnival and a Secret Santa Shop. Many parents served as mentors and assisted with classroom activities.

Curriculum and Instruction

A system wide committee with representatives from each school and each grade level, met to revise thematic units. These units were centered on character traits. Academic subjects were then integrated around a central theme. Each lesson was correlated to the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study"* and grouped by weeks and months into a system-wide pacing format. Some grade levels had included sample activities in the units. All teachers were given copies of the revised thematic units as well as stock cards that contain *"The North Carolina Standard Course of Study.* This condensed version enabled teachers to have easy access as apart of their lesson plans.

A system-wide writing articulation was in place and provided teachers an overview of what was expected in the system. A separate mathematics pacing guide utilized *Saxon Math* and included extra days for special skills when appropriate. As a means to support instruction, an e-mail system facilitated timely updates and system-wide grade level meetings are held.

Preparation for the schedules for end-of-grade-tests" began with teachers analyzing test data from the previous year and using this information to make instructional decisions. A variety of test preparation materials were used including *Testlets, Blast Off and Reading Coach.*

Level I and II students in third, fourth and fifth grades were given small group instruction in reading. Test-taking skills were taught to all students. High expectations were held for all students and encouragement given. All students in grades three through five who were present, on time and exhibited hard work during the two days of testing were rewarded with a bowling trip. Pep rallies led by teachers, the principal and high school cheerleaders were held the week before the tests.

East Elementary was fortunate to have many and varied programs and activities in place that impacted on student achievement. All students in grades two through five participated in the *Accelerated Reader* program. Thirty minutes of self-selected reading was an integral part of each day and an awards program encouraged students to read. The *STAR* program was available for those students facing particular challenges. Trophies were awarded to classrooms on each grade level with the highest number of earned points. The student in each grade level with the highest point total also received a trophy. Students were expected to read fifteen minutes each night.

Saxon Math was taught in all grades including kindergarten. Manipulatives and mental math were emphasized. A pacing guide correlated with the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* for each grade level was used. Extra days of instruction were available for teaching specific skills. Time was also set aside to accommodate quarterly and state assessments in grades K-2.

Saxon Phonics was taught in grades K-2. These lessons were taught in heterogeneous classes in order to develop a solid foundation. New learning was presented in increments that were reviewed throughout the year. A daily spelling component was included.

Thinking Maps and *Write From the Beginning* strategies were employed in kindergarten through third grade to help students to develop thinking skills, use creativity, work cooperatively and learn to think reflectively. Thinking and writing were taught in a developmentally appropriate format. Guided reading, self-selected reading, shared reading, writing and a word block which are parts of the *Four-Block Literacy Model* had been implemented in all classrooms. The Title I staff assisted students in first and second grades in *Child Oriented Reading Experiences*, which was a one-on-one tutorial program.

The use of technology was an integral part of the instructional day. A Jostens' computer program used by third through fifth grades was a part of the daily reading and mathematics program.

There were two other vital programs in the school. Communities in Schools which, in partnership with East Elementary, was the link with local agencies and resources to provide basic necessities and assistance with health screenings. *KIDS ETC.* was a before and after-school program that provided a structured environment for students to complete homework.

East Elementary was fortunate to have a full-time guidance counselor who is instrumental in addressing the day-to-day needs of students.

To assist the students in organization and to keep parents informed of their child's progress, a homework assignment book was provided to all students in grades one through five. Teachers sent weekly progress reports home and adult signatures were required. Student portfolios were maintained and contained writing samples, K-2 Literacy Assessment with Reading Continuum Summative Profiles, running records, *Saxon Math* assessments, quarterly state mathematics assessments with observation profiles and Brigance test results.

Students in grades three though five who required acceleration were provided an hour of after-school assistance twice a week in reading and math sponsored by Communities in Schools. During the school day small groups of students who scored Level I or II in reading on the state test received extra help from the Title I teacher and the Reading Specialist.

Services to behaviorally-at-risk students were provided in a warm, caring environment. The principal made all placements and teachers provided appropriate work for any student assigned to the discipline lab.

Students who performed at Levels III and IV were challenged through activities in the gifted education program. The curriculum here was centered on science units. Learning activities extended beyond the regular classroom. Questions were phrased in all classrooms so that all students used higher-order thinking to find answers and solutions to problems. The *Accelerated Reader* program challenged all students to read at their own level.

Instruction in the non-tested areas was enhanced through the use of the *Weekly Reader* that supported all subjects and students often take field trips to culminate or extend classroom learning. Some classrooms had animals that provided opportunities for hands-on learning and this was an ideal vehicle for teaching the monthly character trait.

The entire East Elementary staff was involved with improving student achievement and was an integral part of the total instructional program. Teacher assistants were a resource in the after-school remediation sessions. They also assessed students during the three K-2 Assessment quarters and often worked one-on-one with students requiring special assistance in CORE and *Great Leaps*.

The school had a tradition of collaboration and teamwork. Everyone assumed responsibility for student achievement. A high level of trust and support existed along with high expectations and a desire for excellence. Teachers and administrators, together with media, resource and guidance specialists, worked closely to achieve goals. Grade-level teachers had a common planning time.

The *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* was the main focus of discussion at each system wide grade-level meeting and was correlated with grade-level materials in thematic units. A condensed version was provided to teachers and was an easy reference when lesson plans were being prepared. State documents such as *Understanding the Testlets, Technology Samplers* and *Week by Week Essentials for Mathematics* were utilized.

The Kings Mountain central office staff ensured that articulation occurred. They provided teachers the necessary instructional materials and up-to-date information while facilitating a common grade-level planning time and assisting with teacher evaluations. Schools in the system received staff development and textbook monies. Decisions regarding expenditures are school-based. The system provided a curriculum specialist and a technology specialist who worked closely with the elementary schools.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

In order to understand and prepare for the Student Accountability Standards a district wide summer school was held yearly for all students who scored at Levels I and II. East Elementary required all students in this category to attend. The after school remediation program and the Homework Club also helped to prepare students.

Closing the Achievement Gap

The proficiency gap between minority and other students in grades three through five in math had been reduced to less than 1%. The proficiency gap in reading was, however, much larger. School wide programs and activities were in place to address closing this gap.

Professional Development

Professional development was a vital part of East Elementary School. In an effort to improve student achievement all teachers received instruction related to school goals at the beginning of each school year.

Workshops for new programs such as *Write From the Beginning* and *Four Block Instruction* as well as the new science book adoption were conducted. Strategies for working with at-risk students were reviewed and appropriate referral procedures were presented. No training specific to working with advanced students had been provided, however. Follow-up was necessary and had been provided from consultants who represented *Write From the Beginning* and *Four-Block*.

School Climate

A warm, inviting, safe school climate was an essential component of East Elementary School. Parents, school and community worked cooperatively to ensure that all children were provided with an environment in which to learn. A student handbook was provided for all students. Teachers discussed with their own class the school rules and consequences as well as the dress code. A system-wide Code of Conduct brochure was sent home to all parents and required a signature.

A school safety program was in place at East Elementary. Students helped patrol hallways and walkways. KIDS ETC., the before-and-after school care program, was available. A system wide medication policy assured that required documentation was completed before medication is given. Visitors entering East Elementary registered in the school office and wore a visitor badge. Students who arrived late or left school early signed in and out. Teachers and teacher assistants were assigned rotating car and bus duties.

The instructional support personnel were instrumental in the school climate. Everyone assumed responsibility for student behavior. The full-time counselor, media specialist, resource teacher, teacher assistants, part-time speech teacher and visiting staff were committed to helping teachers and students. As a result of the school's focus and the support of staff there were no violence incidents reported for the 1999 school year.

East Elementary School was friendly, inviting, safe and orderly. The entire school family was aware of the great challenge involved in attaining high achievement. The school, parents and community worked together to provide support to ensure that all children learn. Students were not permitted to fail. Appropriate behavior was expected and the principal supported teachers when discipline was necessary. The school had strong scouting programs for boys and girls. Strong community pride had been built through an on-going award winning beautification program.

FAYETTEVILLE STREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

2905 Fayetteville St.
Durham North Carolina 27707
919.560.3489

Durham Public Schools
Ann T. Denlinger, Superintendent
Queen M. Bass, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Urban
Grade span at the school	K - 5
Number of certified staff members	31
Number of classified staff members	19
Number of lateral entry staff members	1
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:17
Student attendance rate	97.7%
Attendance rate of faculty	98%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	3
Teacher turnover rate	10%

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
K	49	African-American	297	85%
1	66	Asian	1	.3%
2	64	Caucasian	1	.3%
3	59	Hispanic	47	13.5%
4	70	Native American		
5	41	Other	3	.9%

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	278	79.7%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	28	90%
Asian		
Caucasian	3	10%
Hispanic		
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience				31	

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Principal	Teacher-Chair
Six teachers	One assistant principal
Two parents	One community representative

Leadership

The principal had a diverse, rich and relevant preparation for her role. She started out in the business world, which equipped her well in terms of organizational and management skills. She also has had broad and progressive school experience, having served at both the middle school (magnet school principal and assistant principal) and high school (teacher and assistant principal) levels--the latter under a renowned Durham Public Schools educator. This experience gaves her a better view of how elementary school must prepare students for their continuing education. Because she is starting her fourth year at this school, the principal also attributes part of her success to having had adequate time to have a positive impact on the school. Her style is one of empowering her staff, the school improvement team and her grade-level chairs to be successful, which is evidenced by they're being:

- Well-trained and capable
- Dedicated and hard-working, such that they won't let any students fail or any lack of resources be a barrier
- A stable, coherent group that results in relatively low turnover
- Well-coordinated and integrated across grade-levels, including kindergarten through second grades
- Regular and good communicators with each other
- Caring and willing to reach out to students and their parents

This principal facilitated these outcomes by regularly observing her classes and teachers, talking with her teachers and students, studying teachers' lesson plans and team meeting minutes, and informing her staff by way of best practice research and central office communiqués.

Curriculum and Instruction, Student Accountability Standards, Parent Involvement and Achievement Gaps

The *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* was the faculty's standard vehicle for communicating and coordinating across grade-levels and subject areas. Their approach to instruction was needs-driven. They engaged in constant benchmark assessment and testing, as facilitated by a K - 5 data analysis study group; targeted students for extra assistance or acceleration; and paced themselves to be able to revisit the *North*

Carolina Standard Course of Study at least twice before end-of-grade testing.

The staff provided numerous instructional interventions and programs that tend to be more traditional than technological in nature. One was significant parent and community involvement in the school in the form of volunteers that include site-based management team parents, university (Duke and NCCU) students, Glaxo-Wellcome employees, and senior citizens. A second effort involves a daily 75-minute literacy or reading block for all grades, highlighted by the *HOSTS* (tutoring/mentoring) program. In addition to the *HOSTS* program, Levels I and II students receive specific vocabulary instruction, reading recovery assistance, and extra instructional time--including after-school tutoring. Levels III and IV students received accelerated reading instruction-- facilitated by AG teachers who work with regular classroom teachers, *SRA* instruction for upper grades, and requirements to write in every subject. After-school assistance is offered daily until as late as 5:30 p.m., and through Saturday academies. Incentives for student achievement included field trips, parties and honors assemblies. The new Student Accountability Standards have been promoted via PTA meetings, including a videotaped presentation; parent conferences; and brochures sent home with the students.

Staff development tended to be more in-house driven than reliant on the central office or any external agent. Primary activities included weekly planning meetings for both grade levels as well as subject areas, the K-5 testing data study group mentioned earlier, and ongoing sharing of knowledge and information.

School Climate and Parent Involvement

The principal's philosophy is one of having an "open door," and reaching out to the community and parents that the school serves. Few and relatively non-serious incidents occurred in the school, which may be attributable to the principal's involvement of local law enforcement and numerous parent volunteers. The apparent climate of the school was one of openness, vitality, and working together in a family-like atmosphere.

HARDIN PARK ELEMENTARY

361 Jefferson Road
Boone, North Carolina 28607
828.264.8481

Watauga County Schools
Richard M. Jones, Superintendent
Mary Smalling, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Surburban
Grade span at the school	K-8
Number of certified staff members	66
Number of classified staff members	33
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:24
Student attendance rate	99.2%
Attendance rate of faculty	89%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	6
Teacher turnover rate	12.9%

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
K	76	African-American	39	5%
1	71	Asian	9	1%
2	84	Caucasian	676	88.4%
3	75	Hispanic	16	2%
4	85	Native American	11	1%
5	77	Other	23	3%
6	93			
7	88			
8	16			

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	274	35.8%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
Caucasian	66	100%

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years Of Experience	8	9	12	9	28

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Principal	Third grade teacher
Two assistant principals	Second grade teacher
Two kindergarten parents	Exceptional children reading teacher
Eighth grade language arts teacher	Exceptional children self-contained teacher
Seventh grade language arts teacher	Vocational education teacher
Sixth grade math/language arts teacher	

Leadership

The school, which changed from an "open classroom" school in the mid 70s, was proud of its ability to work together as a team. The school served as the county's center for exceptional students who were mainstreamed into several classes for social development. The principal, an approachable individual, was the instructional leader who listened and acted on concerns and shared leadership with the staff and the school improvement team. The school improvement team made many decisions regarding preparing for Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) visits, teacher assignments, and class sizes. The principal was highly visible and regularly monitored instruction, visited classes when special presentations or events occurred, attended grade-level planning, and fostered regular team planning. She knew the curriculum, was knowledgeable of changes, and new developments and kept the staff updated. She assisted teachers in obtaining the things needed for instruction. The staff arrived for the day no later than 7:40 a.m. and one of the first persons seen upon arrival was the principal as she greeted students, parents, and staff as they arrived. She also provided guidance, feedback, needed resources, and learning opportunities for teachers in order to help strengthen instruction and learning. Under the leadership of the principal, who was in her first year at Hardin Park Elementary, team and grade-level planning became more regular, concentrated, and focused. Resource teachers reinforced what was planned for reading, writing, and mathematics in their classes.

New teachers were assisted by the principal, provided mentoring by experienced teachers in the school, and received support from the central office.

Parent Involvement

Parents were made aware of requirements of the student accountability model, and informed of ABCs requirements and expectations for students. Teachers conferenced with parents and held open house sessions for each grade level. When parents and students came in for conferencing, they left with a plan for success. Parents volunteered to tutor, students in reading, math, and writing. Through the highly active PTO, they coordinated and funded many projects and activities that were of interest or needed by the school. They purchased a copier for the school, assisted in acquiring additional microscopes, and playground equipment, as well as a greenhouse. They did fund-raising, and provided scholarship funds for students who otherwise would not have been able to participate during class trips. The PTA focuses on cultural awareness every other year. Each year the school put together a list of needs and parents through the PTA made decisions about needs. Parents also volunteered to help reduce the teacher to student ratios, and assisted in the office.

The school is located in a caring community in which learning and the performance of students are very important to parents.

Curriculum and Instruction

The instructional program was based on the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, and included curriculum alignment, integration, the use of pacing guides, benchmark testing, and mid-year and other on-going assessments. Teachers made the most of small and cooperative groups and had high expectations of all students. Results of student assessments assisted teachers in planning, identifying student weaknesses, and reteaching and revising instruction accordingly. *Accelerated Reader*, *Blast-off*, the *North Carolina Coach* series, and *Sharpen Up* were used six to nine weeks prior to end-of-grade testing to supplement learning and improve test performance. Released versions of tests were also used. The *Accelerated Reader* program was very encouraging for slower readers. Grades K-2, 3-5, and 6-8 planned together as grade level teams. The school also implemented *LEAP (Learning Early and Progressing)*, a program designed to assist Levels I and II students in reading, vocabulary, and spelling. With adequate progress students left the *LEAP* program and participated fully in regular classroom studies. *Pegasus* was another program the school implemented. Through this integration program students were required to read a minimum of seven novels on topics in social studies and geography, with related field trips following.

Title I funds were helpful and some pull-outs did occur. The curriculum was articulated both horizontally and vertically through the use of curriculum guides and grade-level and subject area planning. Teachers of academically or intellectually gifted and learning disabled students teachers participated in planning sessions and became more inclusive and focused on classroom expectations. Teacher assistants were co-workers, extra hands in the classroom, and vital to the instructional program. They helped to ensure that all students were served individually based on their needs. They were trained in *LEAP* and participated in many other staff development sessions. Student teachers from Appalachian State University (ASU) were also helpful to the instructional program.

Preparing students began the first day of school in an attempt to build a foundation through the use of curriculum integration, math manipulatives, and higher order concepts. Testing skills were a part of regular classroom practices. Reading instruction was a protected block, which lasted for 90 minutes. Some teachers team-taught, while in other classes high achievers were assigned to one teacher, and middle and Level I and II students were taught by other teachers. Students were frequently assessed and assigned to higher levels based on assessment data. Science and social studies were taught as reading classes and some teacher-made tests were structured similar to end-of-grade tests. DPI testlets and teacher-made tests were used to assess students. Students with special needs were assigned a buddy. Leveling occurred in reading and mathematics, and science and social studies reinforced what occurred in other classes. Mathematics and science were integrated, and a 90-minute block of instructional time was established for reading and language arts in both the elementary and middle grades. A 90-minute block was also devoted to science, health, and social studies in the middle grades on alternating semesters.

Tutoring for small groups of students and one-on-one sessions occurred during the day and after school hours for many students. The use of tutors, parents and student teachers allowed teachers to do more student conferencing. Emphasis on writing occurred during tutoring and in all classes. The principal reviewed mid-term progress reports and counseled with all students who did not do well. The school had a homelink whereby parents could check on assignments, homework, and messages about their children.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

The school had an after-school and Saturday tutoring program which also included helping students with homework assignments. Teachers identified the needs of students and had primary control in structuring the instructional program. Regular assessments of students were a practice in the school and data obtained from assessments were used to direct instruction and assist students.

Closing the Achievement Gap

The school held a parent night for parents and scheduled a mandatory meeting for each parent to meet with their child's teacher(s) to discuss the student accountability model, performance and grades. Parents had to sign a contract stating that they understood the model and would discuss it with their children. Student accountability was discussed at length with students and they also had to sign a statement to indicate that they understood the model.

Professional Development

Staff was afforded several opportunities to participate in appropriate professional development activities. Most opportunities focused on strategies for teaching reading, writing, and mathematics, and technology. Professional development also included teachers sharing what they learned with other teachers. The central office provided orientation and conducted appropriate workshops.

School Climate

The school had dedicated and supportive staff members and administrators who shared a common goal. The school benefited from the support of the community and local state agencies. It was clean, positive, warm, friendly, orderly and had an inviting atmosphere. All felt safe in the school and rarely experienced very serious behavior problems. The school had in place a safety plan, and a crisis team, and counselors worked with students on the "Eight Keys to A Better Me." The code of conduct and classroom rules were visible in classrooms, and students were recognized for good behavior and positive actions.

HARKERS ISLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

1163 Island Road
Harkers Island, North Carolina 28531
252.728.3755

Carteret County Schools
David K. Lenker, Superintendent
Paul R. Payne, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Rural
Grade span at the school	K-8
Number of certified staff members	17
Number of classified staff members	10
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:10
Student attendance rate	94%
Attendance rate of faculty	93%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	1
Teacher turnover rate	1 per year

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/ Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
K	11	African-American		
1	12	Asian		
2	11	Caucasian	163	98%
3	21	Hispanic		
4	19	Native American		
5	26	Other	3	2%
6				
7				
8				

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	69	42%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American		
Asian		
Caucasian	15	93%
Hispanic		
Native American		
Other	1	7%

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience		5	2		11

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Kindergarten teacher	Chapter I teacher
Fourth grade teacher	Technology teacher
Media specialist	Second grade teacher
One teacher for grades 6,7,8 social studies/language arts	

Leadership

The principal valued the stable staff and treated them as self-motivated, dedicated professionals. Many have been with him during his eight years as administrator at Harkers Island Elementary School. They described him as visible and accessible. He asked for input, listened to his teachers, trusted them and supported them in trying new ideas. High expectations of students and teachers were modeled daily as he monitored classrooms. Problems were acknowledged and resolved. His leadership involved handling each teacher and student in a different style and pushing people on what they needed to improve. He stayed informed about new tools to improve student achievement. The principal questioned teachers about what should be changed and provided resources to support projects for improving student achievement. The principal insisted that teachers not restrict themselves to textbooks for instruction and that they use the state item banks in *Test Magic* as part of their assessments. The *Computer Curriculum Corporation Lab* was implemented from his suggestion.

The school improvement team proposed calendar changes, made decisions about resources and staff development, and gave input on budget items. The principal believed in always getting input from his staff and using the leadership of the school improvement team.

Parent Involvement

The school had close ties to its community, and the community viewed the school with high expectations and pride. Parents volunteered regularly and helped provide a family atmosphere at the school. They participated in a quarterly breakfast club called "My Parents at Work and at Play". Many served lunch, materials, tutored in reading, helped with recess, and participated in benefits. The close-knit family relationship drew parents to the school. Teachers knew all the students from kindergarten through eighth grade. This promoted close parent contact and communication about student achievement.

Curriculum and Instruction

The small number of teachers and the collegial atmosphere of Harkers Island Elementary encouraged sharing of curriculum knowledge. Teachers talked daily about what they were teaching and discussed instructional strategies across grade-levels. The media center was used extensively. Teachers shared unit topics with the media specialist who supported them with special displays and resources related to their topics. Every student participated in the *Accelerated Reader Program* and collected points that could be redeemed in the school "shopping spree" at the end of the year. Classes accessed the internet from the library computers and did research on assigned topics. The *Computer Curriculum Corporation Lab* was used 30 minutes a day by every class. Special teachers coordinated with the regular classroom teachers to support instructional units.

Students in need of additional help were identified and provided support and direct instruction in class and after school. The Title I teacher and the first grade teacher worked together to identify children who were ready to read. Each student was given 45 minutes a day of reading instruction individually for 13 weeks. The Title I teacher diagnosed reading problems and used appropriate instruction. *Orton -Gillingham* was helpful for some. During second semester the teacher gave identified third, fourth, and fifth grade students reading remediation for half of each day. Beginning in September and continuing through the year, tutorials after the regular school day were provided. Middle school students were tutored after-school the last nine weeks of school. The *Battle of the Books* competition involved middle school students in extending reading time.

Exceptional children were made to feel a part of all activities. No one was left out. A resource teacher provided enrichment for academically gifted students. Preventive planning enabled behaviorally at-risk students to participate in class without major disruptions.

Non-tested subjects were integrated into tested area instruction. Integration in chart stories was one example of this. Non-certified staff supported student achievement by listening to students read daily and by reinforcing skills. Elective teachers stressed math and writing skills.

Preparation for the end-of- grade tests included administering the secure-for-local-use forms of the end-of-grade tests in January, providing tutorials, and using test item banks. Central office staff supported the school with resources for elective courses and their presence as needed. Periodic meetings were held to coordinate curriculum areas.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

The school system promoted understanding of the statewide accountability standards by providing information in brochures passed out to all students and by encouraging viewing of television tapes about the standards. Personalized Education Plans were written for the fourth graders who did not make proficiency on the state writing test. Summer school was offered by the school system.

Closing the Achievement Gap

Harkers Island Elementary did not identify cohort groups for performance analysis. Teachers provided individual instruction for each student with below grade-level performance.

Professional Development

Technology was used throughout the school. Teachers received training in HyperStudio, K-3 phonics, reading, and in teaching writing. Central office personnel provided follow-up and support.

School Climate

Harkers Island Elementary School was described as place where everyone gets along very well. Cafeteria workers, custodians, faculty, administration and students were friendly, caring, value-centered, warm, welcoming, and accepting. Student behavior was the responsibility of everyone in the building. The family atmosphere provided a happy, calm, positive environment without behavior problems.

JEFFERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

1400 New Garden Road
Greensboro, N.C. 27410
336.316.5870

Guilford County Public Schools
Terry B. Grier, Superintendent
William Stewart, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Urban
Grade span at the school	PreK-5
Number of certified staff members	44
Number of classified staff members	35
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:24.5
Student attendance rate	97%
Attendance rate of faculty	Excellent
Number of teachers new to this school last year	
Teacher turnover rate	7%

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
PreK	17	African-American	165	23%
K	114	Asian	40	6%
1	125	Caucasian	435	60%
2	118	Hispanic	27	4%
3	108	Native American	7	1%
4	112	Other	42	6%
5	122			
Total	716		716	100%

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	184	26%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	6	14%
Asian		
Caucasian	37	84%
Hispanic		
Native American		
Other	1	2%

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	5	16	7	4	12

School Improvement Team Members

Three parents	Fifth grade teacher
Kindergarten teacher	Teacher assistant
First grade teacher	BED teacher
Second grade teacher	Media specialist
Third grade teacher	Principal
Fourth grade teacher	

Leadership

Jefferson Elementary School was in its first year of existence during the 1999-2000 year. The principal has served as an assistant Headmaster and Headmaster in the private school sector, and as an assistant principal and principal at the elementary and secondary levels. As an administrator he demonstrated a high regard for his staff and students. He set the tone for the school by stressing academic learning as a top priority; character education was also important. He communicated goals and objectives clearly and held high expectations for staff and students. The mission of the school, in partnership with home and community, was to encourage the children to achieve academic excellence, to accept responsibility, and to respect diversity in a safe and caring environment. Instruction was monitored by the principal and assistant principal through classroom visits. The staff had been directed to focus on Guilford County's prioritized curriculum. School success was achieved by having a vision, assessing the needs of students and academic resources, and the hard work and dedication of the staff. It was also apparent that volunteers provided a valuable contribution to the school.

Parent Involvement

It was the belief of the faculty and administration that the school should be connected to parents and the community. An outstanding PTA provided a variety of services and funding to the school. Parent volunteers were used to assist in individual tutorial sessions in reading and math, *Math Super Stars*, *Accelerated Reader*, hospitality, landscaping, lunch buddies, and in many other ways.

Curriculum and Instruction

The principal and all staff exhibited a willingness to work together. The overall atmosphere of the school was very supportive of students, parents and community. Throughout the year, there was a collaborative effort among staff to do whatever was needed to reach high expectations and to accomplish identified goals. Teachers worked individually and as a group to ensure that each student was successful. Information was shared during grade-level and faculty meetings. Teachers were encouraged and supported by the principal. The entire staff was very caring. Strong leadership was evident, and special effort was made to ensure that teachers had input and a buy-in to overall improvement and initiatives of the school.

Programs and resources included *Blast Off*, *RUNNERS (Racing Towards Reading Success)*, *Accelerated Reader*, *Odyssey of the Mind*, hands-on activities, and peer tutoring. A variety of learning opportunities for the students were available through Student Council, Safety Patrol, Chorus, and the Jump Rope Team. These activities afforded an opportunities for the whole student to be reached. Jefferson was a National Paideia Demonstration School. The faculty was trained in the Seminar and Coaching strategies, and utilized seminars to present character education throughout the curriculum. Instruction focused on the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. The faculty created opportunities for small group instruction with an intense focus on reading, writing, and math. Students took many field study trips and experiences.

Students performing at Levels III and IV were provided enrichment activities. They were also provided opportunities to assist as peer tutors. *Accelerated Reader* was used as enrichment to challenge and motivate students at Levels III and IV. Challenging assignments were given through the *Accelerated Reader* enrichment activities that were shared among teachers. Compacting and differentiated methods of instruction also provided challenging opportunities. The pacing of lessons afforded Levels III and IV students the experience of greater academic accomplishment.

Instruction in non-tested areas focused on the integration of core subjects with non-tested subject areas. Reading skills, math, and writing were integrated into non-tested subjects. Audio-visual resource materials relating to non-core subjects were used as an instructional tool. The school provided educational field trips for hands-on experiences and exposure for academic growth.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

Students were prepared for the end-of grade and testing experience by being given tests on a regular basis. Teachers also had high expectations of students and communicated those expectations at each grade level. All teachers focused on the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* and recognized the importance of curriculum alignment. Curriculum articulation (vertical and horizontal) was provided through frequent meetings of faculty.

After-school tutorial sessions in reading and writing were offered to any student needing assistance. Utilization of Item Banks and released forms of the end-of-grade test were also used. The test vocabulary was used and students became comfortable with test-taking strategies. Emphasis was placed on higher order thinking skills. The *Accelerated Reader* program exposed students to more reading opportunities. Teachers used different strategies to re-teach objectives that students needed for improvement. The school also had a well-equipped computer lab with an instructor who was available to provide individual as well as group assistant. New strategies to improve instruction included utilizing a teacher assistant and fourth grade advanced learner teacher to lower student teacher ratios during writing instruction; hiring two fourth grade writing tutors for 20 weeks; emphasis on tiered lessons in all classrooms to enhance differentiated instruction; and K-2 benchmarks and assessments (reading and math).

Closing the Achievement Gap

Students performing at Levels I and II were provided tutors to work one-on-one. Time was made available for students before, during and after school to receive needed assistance. The Title I program assistant and teachers were assigned to work with students one hour per day providing remedial services. Retired certified teachers were hired to provide tutoring and remediation for students identified at Levels I and II. Teachers provided silent reading opportunities for students in order to work with Level I and Level II students. Peer tutors were also used to assist students needing additional help. Teachers volunteered their time to provide after-school tutoring. These services were made available through the JETS (Jefferson Elementary Tutorial Services) Program. The computer lab was used to help students in math.

Professional Development

Selected staff attended professional development activities in areas of academic interest. Training and workshops were also provided by the central office. Many of the faculty members were trained at the Center for Creative Leadership and continue to maintain contact with the leadership organization.

School Climate

The principal was a major contributor to the overall positive atmosphere of the school. The school staff worked hard to ensure that parents felt welcomed and informed. The school was warm, clean, and friendly. The school's overall environment and climate appeared to be very safe, caring and orderly. It appeared that the community also took pride in keeping the school and its grounds safe and clean. Faculty and students that were asked about school safety felt they were in a very safe setting. Rules and visitor regulations were clearly posted. The school counselor was viewed as a critical staff member who provided a great deal in the area of supportive services (i.e. social, emotional, and personal support).

JEFFREYS GROVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

6119 Creedmoor Road
Raleigh, North Carolina 27612
919.881.4910

Wake County Schools
William R. McNeal, Superintendent
Vickie Y. Brown, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Suburban
Grade span at the school	K-5
Number of certified staff members	41
Number of classified staff members	17
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:26
Student attendance rate	96%
Attendance rate of faculty	97%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	1
Teacher turnover rate	2%

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
K	89	African-American	166	28%
1	111	Asian	11	2%
2	111	Caucasian	376	62%
3	102	Hispanic	44	7%
4	88	Native American	1	.3%
5	103	Other		

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	190	32%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	3	7%
Asian		
Caucasian	37	90%
Hispanic	1	2%
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	8	10	7	7	9

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Principal	Fifth grade teacher
Kindergarten teacher	Assistant principal
Teacher assistant	Literacy teacher
Second grade teacher	Music teacher
Third grade teacher	Three Parents
Fourth grade teacher	

Leadership

This was the second year for the principal at Jeffreys Grove Elementary School. Her background was in curriculum and instruction with an internship in clinical supervision and prior experiences as an assistant principal. She felt strongly that one of her roles as an instructional leader was to provide a supportive learning environment for students as well as teachers. This was done by supporting teachers with instructional and human resources and strategies for learning. Another was to know the curriculum and best practices in order to help teachers understand and be able to implement best practices.

Communication was important and curriculum updates were given out as soon as they were received. Issues were addressed through a series of "faculty forums". Supplemental reading was provided as a follow-up to training. Improvement of student achievement was accomplished by investigating what others were doing and sharing information. Teachers received updated curriculum information with training and staff development.

Besides working with curriculum issues, the school improvement team helped determine staff development needs, revised the school improvement plan, determined effective use of resources, and worked with community activities.

New teachers met with their assigned mentors weekly and kept a journal of their experiences. The mentor coordinator met with the teachers and mentors monthly. In addition to observation by mentors, time was given for initially licensed teachers to observe other teachers. There was strong support from the grade-level team for curriculum planning.

The principal was visible in classrooms by doing informal and formal observations, checking lesson plans when observing, and meeting monthly with grade-level teams.

Parent Involvement

The school felt that parents and teachers were partners in the education of all students. Jeffreys Grove is a neighborhood school, and parents provided strong support, feeling welcomed with its open-door policy. Conferences with teachers were held twice a year, at the first and third grading periods. Volunteers help with a Study Buddy program. The parent organization provided Super Planners for fourth and fifth grade students to help with organizing and planning.

Parents helped with special events such as Science Expo, Family Bingo, Spring Carnival, etc. The principal met with parents in small groups every six weeks to discuss curriculum topics or other issues.

Curriculum and Instruction

Through sharing at staff meetings, all teachers were familiar with all grade-level expectations of the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. Teachers adhered to the curriculum and kept good records of students' progress. Teaching testing terminology and using the vocabulary when designing tests helped prepare students for the real testing situation. Teachers also used question stems, test-taking strategies, *Blast Off* and testlets to help prepare students.

The system-wide Accelerated Learning Program for students performing at Levels I and II was one strategy used for increasing student performance. In a school-based decision, Jefferys Grove chose to implement their program with Saturday School, half-days on Saturdays for twenty days. Differentiated and small-group instruction through curriculum alignment and mapping also worked to increase achievement for all students. Students performing at Levels III and IV were served through flexible grouping and research projects. A full-time teacher for academically/intellectually gifted students provided additional resources for classroom teachers by utilizing questioning techniques.

Non-tested areas were integrated into the curriculum mapping. Reading was taught in content areas, and special area teachers incorporated themes in their classes. All special teachers are expected to attend staff meetings and participate in school-wide staff development activities.

Teacher assistants attended staff development with their supervising teacher. All teacher assistants participated in a workshop on Cooperative Discipline for Teacher Assistants.

Common planning time enabled grade-level teams to meet weekly. Each grade-level team met once a month with the principal and with the instructional resource teacher to insure that curriculum issues were being addressed.

There was continual support from the central office through training and staff development, especially with literacy assessment. Central office provided optional training in data analysis. Selected faculty members from Jeffreys Grove attended the training and worked with the rest of the staff to analyze and disaggregate their test data.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

Jeffreys Grove held a series of meetings with parents to explain the standards and gateways. Conferences held at the end of the first and third quarters also provided time for parents to discuss their child's progress using a quarterly benchmark report developed by the school staff.

Faculty met with all students in third, fourth and fifth grades to discuss the standards and the importance of doing their best. Teachers wanted students to be successful and convey this message by providing opportunities for success through differentiated instruction based on the students' needs.

Closing the Achievement Gap

Faculty studied the test data to determine who was moving forward and who was not. The goal was to move all students forward by tailoring instruction to the needs of the child and helping them stay focused. This was accomplished through differentiated instruction, the Accelerated Learning Program, centers, and contracts for academics, behavior and organization.

Professional Development

Staff development was focused on literacy assessment and differentiated instruction. During 1999-2000, the school piloted the 3-5 literacy assessment, developed by the central office. Follow-up to the K-2 and 3-5 literacy training was provided with a whole faculty study group using the book *Apprenticeship to Literacy*.

All faculty were trained in holistic writing and scoring, and all faculty helped score the mid-year mock writing test. This enabled all teachers to know the expectations of the writing test and helped prepare students through a school-wide writing program.

Diversity training and integrating technology rounded out the staff development opportunities for the staff. All staff development was aimed toward working with students performing at all levels. For additional help with students performing at Levels III and IV, a full-time teacher for academically/intellectually gifted shared strategies with faculty for incorporating higher order thinking and questioning techniques.

Throughout the year there was an on-going focus on literacy and differentiated instruction. Staff meetings were also times for staff development when the entire staff was engaged in whole-group and small-group discussion on child growth and development as well as instructional issues.

The faculty also participated in Malcolm Baldridge Criteria training and the school improvement team operated within these established guidelines.

School Climate

Jeffreys Grove Elementary School was a warm, inviting place to visit. There were positive but firm expectations of all students. Teachers made sure students were aware of expectations, providing plenty of practice for following the rules. A school-wide discipline policy enforced by the faculty ensured that routines and procedures were followed.

A system-wide program in Character Education focused on one character trait each month. Respecting rights and responsibilities of self and others was taught through role-playing and games. Students practiced conflict resolution.

During 1999-2000 a full-time social worker was available; this year, the social worker is on call only. The counselor worked with teachers and students in whole-group and small-group instruction.

The *Annual Report of School Violence* indicated two incidences involving students who brought pocket knives to school.

KINGSWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

519 Ferrell Street
Cary, North Carolina 27513
919.460.3481

Wake County
William McNeal, Superintendent
Sue P. Sisson, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Surburban
Grade span at the school	K-5
Number of certified staff members	28
Number of classified staff members	6
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	Allotted 1:24; converted to 1:16 through creative use of positions
Student attendance rate	95%
Attendance rate of faculty	95%
Numbers of teachers new to this school year	3
Teacher turnover rate	7%

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/ Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
K	51	African-American	72	23.9%
1	37	Asian	42	14.0%
2	57	Caucasian	157	52.2%
3	45	Hispanic	20	6.6%
4	50	Native American	4	1.3%
5	61	Other	6	2.0%

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	59	19.6%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American		
Asian		
Caucasian	26	96%
Hispanic	1	4%
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	6	16	2	1	2

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Instructional resource teacher	Physical education specialist
First grade teacher	Third grade teacher
Fifth grade teacher	Teacher assistant
Parents	

Leadership

The principal of Kingswood Elementary School has been in leadership for ten years. Since she opened the school, she had considerable input into the selection of the staff. The school has maintained a stable faculty and has creatively used the positions available.

As instructional leader, the principal worked to provide the environment, knowledge and materials that teachers needed in order to support instruction. This was accomplished by a continued focus on instruction and the principal's determination to "eliminate anything that gets in the way of instruction ... for the individual teacher, the grade level team, or the whole school." The principal visited every classroom every day and knew children and parents well.

Teachers described the principal as the "leader of the instructional leaders" because she worked to empower them as leaders. She provided guidance, suggestions based upon research, and training necessary to reach common goals. Collaboration was used to plan for instruction in an organized, structured manner. Grade-level team leaders "emerged" from the ranks and were not predetermined by the principal. All teachers served on one of the school improvement team committees and all had input into instructional practices.

Parent Involvement

Kingswood Elementary School practiced an open-door policy towards parents. They were welcomed in the school to provide assistance in a variety of ways. Some participated by tutoring on a regular basis. A group called "Technology Angels" assisted teachers by training them in the use of new software programs and answering technical questions. Parents could come at any time but were requested to call ahead or make arrangements with the office. The Parent Teacher Association was very active and provided fund-raising activities, teacher appreciation lunches, surprise gifts or treats for teachers, and many other services. Many parents had high expectations for students and worked to support teachers. Parents were described as having the "same agenda" as the school staff.

Curriculum and Instruction

Under the leadership and guidance of the principal, teachers voted to reduce class sizes by converting positions such as assistant principal, art, media, and teacher assistants to regular classroom teachers. As a result the average class size was sixteen and the largest was eighteen. Scheduling avoided removing students during blocked core instructional time and supported high time-on-task.

Kingswood Elementary School utilized several strategies and innovations to help increase student performance. The major focus was on maintaining small class sizes, ensuring organization and structure for teams and individual teachers, differentiating instruction, compacting and challenging students performing at Levels II and III, using guided reading and reader's workshop, developing a school-wide writing plan, and assessing student mastery daily.

The principal exercised financial flexibility in use of funds and personnel positions. The media position was changed to a "learning lab" teacher that combined the roles of a media coordinator, resource teacher, and technology teacher. Organization of art and media was centered on the empowerment of teachers and students to incorporate art and media into their classroom instruction. Classes had thirty minutes weekly for checking out books, in addition to flexible scheduling for research. Students were taught to check out books, and each classroom was responsible for shelving returned books. An "adopt-a-shelf" program was used allowing students to volunteer after school or during recess/free time to assist in organizing media materials. All book and instructional supply orders were made by grade level teams and were focused on selections that support the curricular goals.

The faculty at Kingswood worked together to align instructional plans and formal/informal assessment to the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. The teaching of goals and objective was monitored in monthly curriculum meetings and weekly team meetings.

Teachers used test data to evaluate students' strengths and weaknesses and to tailor curriculum to individual needs. Teaching was purposefully and carefully aligned to skills tested. Question stems that focused on higher-level thinking across disciplines and grades were used. The "skill of the week" for reading was determined by teachers, and focus was placed on incorporating that skill into all lessons. Pacing guides were used for both reading and mathematics. Monthly curriculum meetings were held for each grade-level team and attended by the principal, instructional resource teacher (IRT), and learning lab teacher. During these meetings, teachers presented their plans complete with goals and strategies for the review of the principal. The principal, IRT or learning lab teacher made suggestions, and resources were located as needed. These meetings ensured that teachers were planning collaboratively and were focused upon appropriate goals and objectives. Teachers also met at least once a week for further grade-level planning.

Classroom management and established routines and procedures were evident. Mornings were spent as a block of time for reading, writing and mathematics instruction. After lunch, students received specials (music and physical education), science and social studies. Teachers used cooperative learning strategies, writer's and reader's workshop, accelerated or compacted learning, K-3 literacy assessments and strategies, individualized instruction, and flexible skill grouping. Reading lists developed by teachers were available at each grade level, and teachers adhered to them. Resources such as *Blast Off, North Carolina Coach, Math Strategies, Math Stars,* and testlets were used as needed.

Students performing at Levels I and II were tutored during the day by parent volunteers, the principal, and teacher assistants. An Accelerated Learning Program, conducted by teachers, provided after-school tutoring in groups of two students one day each week. Students performing at Level I and II also attended a learning lab in the media center with no more than four students per class. The learning lab teacher worked with students using techniques and software programs selected to meet individual needs. Teachers of exceptional children and teachers of English as a second language coordinated instruction with the regular classroom teachers by using the pacing guides and collaborating with teachers. Students receiving modifications for testing used these modifications in practice tests at mid-year.

Ongoing daily assessment and individualization allowed students to move at an accelerated pace when they were ready to do so. Students scoring 90% or more on a mathematics unit pretest were "compacted out" for that particular unit. This meant that students selected extension activities, went to the learning lab for enrichment and extension, or did research projects that required them to keep a learning log. The reader's workshop and writer's workshop also led to enrichment for Level III and IV students. Art, music, drama and dance were integrated into the curriculum through thematic units designed to integrate instruction in both tested and non-tested areas. Reading and writing were stressed in the content areas of science, social studies and health. Some teachers taught science for nine weeks and then switched to a social studies unit for the next quarter. Others alternated two days one week with three days the next week for each subject.

Weekly grade-level meetings and monthly curriculum meetings ensured the coordination and focus of instruction among classes through use of pacing guides. Teachers organized plans collaboratively and discussed these plans at weekly meetings and monthly curriculum meetings with the principal and instructional resource teacher.

Teachers frequently mentioned collaboration and teamwork as being paramount in their ability to meet the needs of students. A high level of respect and camaraderie existed among the faculty, and with the principal and other staff at Kingswood Elementary School, and site-based management was practiced. Articulation between and among the grades naturally occurred due to the heavy emphases on grade-level planning, assessing for student needs, and the monthly curriculum meetings. At the end of the year, teachers met to summarize the year's planning and assessment process. They met again in the fall to review plans and ensure focus.

Understanding and Preparing for Student Accountability Standards

The principal and the instructional resource teacher met with parents at the beginning of the school year and as needed to provide information regarding student accountability standards. Teachers used a Powerpoint presentation to provide information regarding what is learned at the child's grade level and what each student should know for the end-of-grade test. The gateway standards were discussed at a meeting with the instructional resource teacher and parents a month or two into the fall semester. The Kingswood Information System was used to convey additional information as needed.

Closing the Gap

The key to closing the achievement gap for Kingswood Elementary was to evaluate carefully the data for each class and each student and develop individual plans to differentiate instruction. Teachers reported that there was no excuse for not differentiating instruction with classes of 1:16. Assessment drove instruction, and the teachers assessed each day for understanding and mastery. Student progress was tracked using scale scores and the differences from one year to the next. The staff met at the end of the school year and the beginning of the new year and evaluated instructional practices to "tweak what they were doing well already" and develop strategies to improve all instruction. The focus was on "not becoming complacent and ensuring that every child works to his/her potential." Other strategies included after-school tutoring with two students per teacher; a learning lab with small-group instruction; volunteer tutors; individual conferencing for students during reading, writing and math instruction; well-planned and consistent instruction and high expectations for all students.

Professional Development

Professional development during the 1999-2000 year was provided in the following areas: quality schools, differentiating instruction, literacy assessment training grades 3-5 (grades K-2 previously trained), and balanced literacy instruction. In order to protect instructional time, the instructional resource teacher or one teacher from the school attended other staff development activities and returned to share the information with colleagues. Further training in technology applications was provided by the learning lab teacher and by parents with expertise. Teachers worked together in study groups, reflected on practices through analysis of their own teaching using video tapes, and worked in groups to refine instructional practices. The principal sought new ideas by attending workshops, listening to colleagues, and visiting schools in the system where students were scoring higher than at Kingswood.

School Climate

The school climate at Kingswood was described as inviting, supportive, positive and upbeat. The faculty, staff and parents "embrace the family philosophy" regarding the school. Consistent collaboration and planning induced a feeling of belonging that resulted in connections between staff members and students.

High expectations for students and staff were an integral part of instruction and management of student behavior. A safe, orderly and caring environment was assured through proactive steps to prevent problems. A highly visible principal, clear and articulated expectations, and cohesive staff maintained order and discipline in a caring environment. Each class held meetings to determine implementation of basic school rules of respect for self, others, and properties. The character development program used in the county was discussed in these group meetings. Students knew that consequences included missing free time to stay in the "consequence room" and complete work missed as a result of poor choices. Parents, students and teachers worked together and ensured that no excuses were accepted for negative behavior, incomplete homework assignments, or tardiness. The proactive approach to discipline resulted in no suspensions during the 1999-2000 school year.

KNOTTS ISLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PO Box 40
413 Woodleigh Road
Knotts Island, NC 27950
252.429.3327

Currituck County Schools
William L Dobney, Superintendent
Faye Freeman, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Rural
Grade span at the school	K-6
Number of certified staff members	12
Number of classified staff members	2
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:20
Student attendance rate	153%
Attendance rate of faculty	
Number of teachers new to this school last year	4
Teacher turnover rate	33%

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
K	19	African-American		
1	19	Asian	3	2%
2	18	Caucasian	149	96%
3	21	Hispanic	3	2%
4	20	Native American		
5	29	Other		
6	29			

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	56	34.5%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American		
Asian		
Caucasian	12	100%
Hispanic		
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	4	5	3	0	0

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Two teachers	Teacher assistant
Counselor	Three parents
Principal	

Leadership

The principal has dedicated much of her life to Knotts Island Elementary School. She was a student there for seven years, returned as a teacher for seventeen years, was the curriculum coordinator for one year, and has been the principal for ten years. When asked why her school did so well, she insisted it was the extraordinary teamwork of the faculty and staff, consistent focus on teaching the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*, and the fact that everyone in the school cared so much for the children. She shared multiple examples of students with varied needs whom she and the teachers have refused to allow to fail. In her own words: "The children were studied carefully and each student was provided with whatever he or she needed to succeed."

Her style of leadership reflected the respect she has for the strong, competent teachers in her school. She put strong emphasis on listening to them, getting the resources they requested, and then leaving them alone to do what they do so well. When they desired to try new strategies, resources or programs, she encouraged them and gave them ample time to prove the new ideas were working. At the same time, she kept a keen eye on student achievement and did not continue to implement anything that was not meeting the academic needs of the students.

Although initially certified teachers or teachers new to her school were assigned official mentors, the principal also served as a mentor. She conducted observations, shared constructive feedback, provided opportunities for less experienced teachers to observe master teachers, and scheduled demonstration lessons. When she deemed it necessary, she taught a lesson herself or volunteered to work with small groups. She knew each of the students well enough that when one was not performing up to his or her potential she let the teachers know their expectations were not high enough. She did not allow any students to get by with performance that was less than their best.

Parent Involvement

Knotts Island Elementary had parent volunteers who tutored students in reading and mathematics and assisted teachers in a variety of ways. A homework hotline system and weekly newsletters kept parents informed. Three parents served on the school improvement team and parents were included in the schoolwide student accountability model. They were asked to sign Student Accountability Agreements and met to discuss intervention strategies included in the Personalized Education Plans. The way the parents supported the school at home was apparent in the students' attitudes toward school and was appreciated by the teachers and principal. The Parent Teacher Association was also active and supportive.

Curriculum and Instruction

The faculty was organized into two instructional teams for primary and intermediate teachers. Weekly team meetings were held to provide opportunity for collaboration and curriculum articulation. Teachers shared information and strategies, planned instruction, and set weekly academic goals. The principal consistently attended team meetings to listen and offer input. Teachers believed the weekly team meetings were an important component in improving student achievement.

The written, taught, and tested curricula were tightly aligned. The *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* was covered thoroughly, and teachers were also well aware of how it would be tested. Students were given nine-week practice tests, and high expectations were established as academic growth goals were set for the year in reading, writing, and mathematics. An end-of-grade test (Released Form) was administered after the middle of the year, and the results were used for instructional planning. Using commercial resources, including *The Competitive Edge, NC Coach, Blast Off,* and *Sharpen Up,* gave students additional practice with the curriculum and with the format of the end-of-grade tests. Students were also made to understand the importance of their academic achievement and test scores. High expectations were articulated throughout the school.

Accelerated Reader and *Reading Renaissance* were credited with motivating students to read and consequently helping to improve student achievement in reading. *Child Oriented Reading Experience (CORE)* provided early intervention in reading for primary students, and the *Hermann Reading Program* targeted students with more severe reading difficulty. Teachers remained well aware of children's progress through the use of various assessments and communicated that progress to parents. *Vocabulary Improvement Practice (VIP)* was used to develop vocabulary and to provide students a challenging curriculum.

Instruction in non-tested areas, such as science and social studies, was ensured by integrating these subjects into the language arts and mathematics curriculum whenever possible. Teachers insisted that non-tested subjects were not neglected as students completed projects and researched topics in those content areas. Both science and social studies blocks of instructional time were part of the weekly schedule.

The instructional remediation program included before and after-school tutoring and during a period of time in the instructional day called the enrichment block. During the enrichment block, no new information was taught. Flexible grouping was used to give students extra help with specific objectives and provide maintenance of skills and information previously taught.

The principal and teachers expressed appreciation for the support and trust demonstrated by Currituck County Schools central office staff. A Teacher Resource Center provided instructional resources, and a Teacher Advisory Committee recognized teachers-of-the-year.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

Teachers credited the high academic expectations of the superintendent with the recent outstanding achievement in Currituck County Schools. They believed implementing the Student Accountability Standards a year before they were required by the State had a great impact on improving student achievement. Parents and students were required to participate in orientation sessions where they received copies of the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* and signed Student Accountability Agreements. These agreements helped parents recognize the importance of their part in their child's education and encouraged students to accept responsibility for their own learning.

The Student Accountability Agreements were said to be important tools for communicating the accountability of all parties involved in the educational process. Parents signed pledges to support regular school attendance, ample study time at home, consistent communication, and attendance at parent/teacher conferences. Students signed the agreement saying they would do such things as respect themselves and others while at school, complete all assignments on time and to the best of their abilities, and ask questions when they did not understand. Teachers were also required to sign a pledge to explain their expectations, instructional goals and grading system, provide a climate that was conducive to learning, and respect the cultural differences of the students. Personalized Education Plans (PEP) were written and discussed with the parents. These plans outlined intervention strategies that would be implemented to help students who needed extra assistance.

Closing the Achievement Gap

Cohort groups of students were not identified nor their achievement analyzed. However, teachers worked with every student on an individual basis, and PEPs ensured that at-risk students received assistance needed to meet academic goals.

Professional Development

The main focus for staff development throughout the year was writing. A consultant contracted by central office provided writing workshops and technical assistance including demonstration lessons. Other staff development was provided in-house by teachers reading and discussing professional literature.

School Climate

Faculty and staff at Knotts Island Elementary described the school climate as welcoming, inviting, warm, and comfortable. Others said the school was goal-oriented and referred to students as always striving for excellence. Teachers mentioned the principal's high expectations, which seemed to automatically filter down to the faculty, non-certified staff, and the students. The supportiveness and caring attitude of the principal and teachers were said to "rub off" on the students as they were overheard commenting to their fellow students, "I'm finished. Do you need help?" One teacher expressed it well when she said, "You don't know how much I love working here! I live much closer to other schools where I could teach, but I come to Knotts Island because of the supportive environment. People here are willing to back you and give you a chance."

LAWSONVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

4611 NC 8 Highway North
Lawsonville, NC 27022
336.593.8284

Stokes County Schools
Randall Henion, Superintendent
Mary M. Sullivan, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Rural
Grade span at the school	Pre-K
Number of certified staff members	15
Number of classified staff members	16
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:20.5
Student attendance rate	96.11%
Attendance rate of faculty	90%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	2
Teacher turnover rate	14%

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
Pre-K	12			
K	51	African-American	1	
1	40	Asian		
2	29	Caucasian	207	92%
3	35	Hispanic	15	6%
4	35	Native American		
5	24	Other	3	1%

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	87	38.5%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American		
Asian		
Caucasian	15	100%
Hispanic		
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	2	4	1	3	5

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

One chairperson	One secretary/recorder
Three teachers	

Leadership

The principal felt that her major responsibility as an instructional leader was to facilitate growth and development within the staff and to assure that the school was a good place for students to learn. Thus, being an instructional leader meant helping students and staff. To accomplish this aim, she drew upon her background as an administrator and as an exceptional children's teacher to provide instructional leadership. As an instructional leader, she provided staff development activities as a means of enhancing student outcomes. To the principal, being visible and interactive with staff, students and parents was a part of that role. Therefore, the principal made frequent and unannounced visits to classrooms. She felt a strong need to know what students were taught and how they were being taught.

Similarly, teachers felt that the instructional leader was responsible for setting the overall tone for. the school. Therefore, this person was accountable for promoting a climate that was conducive to learning. Thus, instructional leaders removed barriers that interfered with teaching and learning.

The mentoring experience for the principal was different from those of teachers. The principal benefited from formal and informal mentoring. At the central office, she worked with the director of special programs who served as a mentor in various areas. A veteran principal provided guidance and helped her by being accessible, open-minded, inclusive, and informative. The veteran principal also helped her to understand the entire realm of the school. On the other hand, new teachers were mentored at the building level by the principal and veteran staff.

The school improvement team impacted upon several facets of the school. The team processed a considerable number of decisions. Primarily, the school improvement team influenced decisions about instructional supplies, books, and technology. The team impacted upon staff development and the distribution of certain funds and is currently exploring how they can obtain a new state of the arts media center. Additionally, the team provided input regarding a variety of management issues, such as planning and approving events and projects and celebrations for students.

The principal put into practice several strategies to help teachers to improve student achievement. She pulled identified students out of class and tutored them. A special focus was placed upon students with disabilities. Group readings were also provided. Additionally, the school administrator developed specific management strategies for students who exhibited behavioral concerns, which interfered with their ability to learn. Positive reinforcement and incentives were used to help turn around negative behaviors.

In an effort to monitor instruction, the principal regularly visited and observed classrooms. She also monitored instruction by examining portfolios and records to determine whether students were meeting their goals. Additionally, she regularly met with and talks to teachers about instructional matters regarding students.

Parent Involvement

Lawsonville Elementary School experienced high levels of parent involvement. Parents volunteered virtually every day by tutoring, putting up bulletin boards, and maintaining school property. The school fostered a climate where parents were welcomed. The school also had a strong and active PTA that assisted the school throughout the year. In addition, parents were involved in the School Improvement Team.

Curriculum and Instruction

Teachers planned the instruction based on the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. They modified the curriculum to meet the needs of students. On a routine basis, teachers discussed individual student performance across grade levels. For example, the current teacher discussed performance with a student's former teacher to develop instructional strategies which benefited the student. They also integrated reading, writing and mathematics in all subjects.

In an effort to meet the diverse needs of students, the principal explored ways to enhance students' self-esteem which impacts upon achievement. She also took a special interest in exceptional children and Limited English proficient students. She also sought innovative ways to enhance learning outcomes for these disadvantaged students. Additionally, teachers met with parents to provide reassurance that they would do all possible to help their children and to solicit parental support in the academic enhancement.

The staff collaborated extensively to prepare students for the end-of-grade tests. Teachers used the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* as the primary means of preparing students for the end-of-grade test and to assure that students were taught what was expected for these examinations. Collaborations were formal and informal. Tutors and volunteers were also used to assist students. In addition, students were given practice tests during the year and modifications were requested when they were needed.

A few basic instructional strategies impacted student performance. The school used *Accelerated Reader* as a supplement to encourage reading. Teachers also emphasized the use of the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* as a fundamental instructional strategy. Aside from these, they focused on self-esteem building to motivate student performance. Teachers indicated that the use of the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* had a profound impact on student performance. In addition, self-esteem building strategies influenced achievement.

Several instructional remediation practices were available to at-risk students. When students exhibited noticeable difficulties, teachers readily informed the principal regarding students who may be at risk of school failure. These students, therefore, received early intervention and referral. On top of these, an after-school tutorial program was provided to assist students with reading and math.

Numerous services were available to at-risk students. They received counseling for academic and social concerns. Exceptional Children teachers served as resources to regular teachers. Appropriate referrals were made to outside agencies as needed. Teachers frequently conducted home visits and encouraged parent involvement. For these students, teachers further ensured academic performance by taking staff development. The principal scrutinized test scores and communicated with staff about various strategies.

In an effort to ensure that students performing at Levels III and IV were continually challenged academically, several strategies were used. Teachers were encouraged to participate in related staff development activities. On the other hand, students were encouraged to use critical skills. Test results were carefully examined to determine strengths and weaknesses.

Though the Lawsonville Elementary School experienced few behavior problems, services were available to behaviorally at-risk students. These students received basic counseling and referral services when they needed them. Aside from this, exceptional children's program teachers served as a resource to regular teachers. Referrals were made to provide assistance to students who were behaviorally at-risk. Periodically, home visits were used to involve parents and to gain support for interventions.

With the purpose of ensuring that non-tested subjects were not neglected in the instructional program, a few basic strategies were used at Lawsonville Elementary School. Curriculum integration was emphasized for all subjects. Non-tested subjects received emphasis comparable to tested classes. All staff was also engaged in improving student achievement through shared planning sessions and reflection logs. All staff was accountable for enhancing student performance. Non-tested subjects also followed the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. Additionally, considerable emphasis was placed on Character Education.

Generally, at-risk students were identified, and teachers used guided studies labs for remediation. Students who had not passed math and reading experienced placement changes. They were assigned to introductory courses. These classes met every day instead of every other day and lasted 90 minutes all year long.

The entire staff was engaged in improving student achievement. Teacher assistants were in every K-2 classroom. In the third grade, teachers shared an assistant. Teacher assistants attended all meetings about curriculum issues. They were also included in the planning and implementation of student achievement strategies. Additionally, teacher assistants participated in staff development activities.

Teachers were strongly encouraged not to operate in isolation but to collaborate with each other. Informal teamwork occurred daily. Formal partnerships took place across grade levels. During planning meetings, teachers discussed best practices and other ways to achieve better student outcomes.

Lawsonville Elementary School received considerable support from the central office. Although central office provided technical assistance, the school relied heavily on the assistance of the Assistant Superintendent for Support Services. Staff also reported that he was competent and accessible. Additionally, the principal maintained a rapport with central office staff since she worked there prior to becoming a principal.

The principal regularly monitored instruction. She observed classrooms almost daily. She also conducted mini-observations each week in addition to formal observations. Unannounced visitations often occurred. In addition, the principal monitored instruction by examining student portfolios, test scores, and student-teacher interactions.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

Lawsonville Elementary School used several strategies to help parents understand the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and the Student Accountability Standards. Various meetings with parents were arranged regarding the matter. Printed information was also sent to parents. In addition, information was provided through PTA meetings and Open House. During this time, teachers explained how the Student Accountability Standards connect with the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*.

Closing the Achievement Gap

The achievement gap was not a great issue at Lawsonville Elementary School since it had a low minority enrollment. This school had a high concentration (93%) of Caucasian students. Hispanic students (6%) constituted the largest minority group. The ESL teacher played a vital role in assisting students who were linguistically and culturally different and who might experience academic problems in the classroom. Teachers relied heavily on the ESL teacher for collaboration and technical assistance.

Professional Development

Several professional development activities were provided to better prepare the principal for improving student achievement as required in the ABCs. These included

- the "How-To" session,
- technology workshops,
- *Thinking Maps,*
- statewide exceptional children's conference, and
- *Four Block (Administrator's Model).*

Additional professional development was planned to assist teachers in working with students performing at all levels. These included

- starting right from the beginning,
- *Thinking Maps,*
- differentiated instruction,
- international applied perceptual control theory, and
- brain-based learning.

To assist teachers in working with Level III and IV students and help them to continue their growth and progress, half of the instructional staff also held AIG licensure.

Follow-up and technical assistance were provided after a professional development activity. This was done by

- monitoring classrooms,
- conducting faculty discussions about professional development activities,

- tapping expertise within school district staff
- using North Carolina Department Public Instruction consultants for technical assistance, and
- constant follow-up.

School Climate

According to the principal, Lawsonville Elementary School was characterized as a "warm, caring, and safe place for students to learn and grow." Staff worked hard to assure that the school was inviting. The principal strongly encouraged staff to exhibit support and encouragement for each student.

In order to inform all students concerning school rules and consequences, several procedures were established. Students were apprised of the rules on the first day of school. Rules were published in the *Student Handbook*. Parents and student received a copy of school rules. Teachers distributed and discussed the rules and consequences in their classes. Teachers also posted individual classroom rules. In addition, the Super Citizen Celebration served as a positive reinforcement of school rules.

Support personnel played vital roles in the safe schools efforts. They participated on the safe schools team. The counselor took a proactive stance regarding school safety. As a result, she dealt with problems early and collaborated with parents to gain their support. Assistance was also received from the school psychologist, although she was not based at the school. Lawsonville did not have a school social worker, but a social worker from the Department of Social Services helped troubled and at-risk students.

Lawsonville Elementary School had no very serious behavior problems, crime or violence as indicated in the *Annual Report on School Violence*. The most serious behavioral problem involved minor arguments and pushing.

LOCKHART ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

1320 Smithfield Road
Knightdale, North Carolina 27545
919.266.8525

Wake County Schools
William R. McNeal, Superintendent
Terri Cobb, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Rural
Grade span at the school	K-5
Number of certified staff members	43
Number of classified staff members	18
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:24
Student attendance rate	98%
Attendance rate of faculty	95%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	6
Teacher turnover rate	15%

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
K	108	African-American	222	32.6%
1	116	Asian	18	2.6%
2	112	Caucasian	344	50.5%
3	106	Hispanic	81	11.9%
4	113	Native American	1	.1%
5	126	Other	15	.2.2%

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	233	35%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	8	20%
Asian		
Caucasian	33	80%
Hispanic		
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	6	14	0	7	14

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Principal	Fifth grade teacher
Kindergarten teacher	Title I teacher
Teacher assistant	Art teacher
Second grade teacher	Instructional resource teacher
Third grade teacher	Two parents
Fourth grade teacher	

Leadership

This was the second year for the principal at Lockhart Elementary School. With a teaching and counseling background plus prior experience as a principal, she was involved with instructional concerns. As an instructional leader, she knew what the faculty was doing in the classroom by being visible, visiting classes for informal and formal observations, and regularly attending grade-level meetings. The principal supported the faculty by being a good listener, "hearing and acting" on their concerns and providing resources as needed. Staff development designed to increase student achievement was an ongoing focus at regularly held faculty meetings. Support was also given for teachers to visit other schools based on individual teacher needs.

The principal served on the school improvement team in an advisory capacity. The team was responsible for making decisions regarding curriculum and instruction, determining needs for instructional materials directly related to the goals on the school's improvement plan, and activities supporting parent involvement.

A strong mentor program provided trained mentors for new faculty members. Staff development was provided at the beginning of the year on the ABCs, testing and the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. Buddies were assigned to teaching assistants new to the school.

Parent Involvement

Parent representatives were chosen by an active PTA to serve on the school improvement team and were part of the decision-making process. The school had a welcoming and inviting environment where parents felt comfortable. There was an open-door policy for parents who wished to have lunch with their child or wanted to volunteer their time. A "Take Home" program enabled parents to stop by the office for task work that could be done at home such as folding and collating brochures, etc. Fathers comprised the "Do Dads" and handle many tasks such as parking for PTA events and parent/teacher conferences. Parents also volunteered to assist in classrooms, served as reading buddies, or helped with school activities.

Curriculum and Instruction

Staff meetings were held regularly and were focused on instruction. Expectations for each grade level were reviewed. Revised curriculum guides were quickly made available to teachers upon receipt by the principal. Weekly grade-level team planning insured that pacing guides were followed. The principal provided support through regular meetings with grade-level teams and other school wide committees. The faculty worked together as a team focusing on common goals.

All certified staff were trained in the writing process and used the writing rubrics to grade the mid-year mock writing test. Teachers carefully followed the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study,* periodically using *Blast Off* and *COACH* to supplement instruction. Using testing vocabulary, item bank, testlets, and released test items provided practice in test-taking skills.

The greatest strategies impacting student achievement included strict adherence to the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study,* and the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), a system-wide remediation initiative for students performing at Levels I and II. A protected block of time was provided for reading, writing and math. Non-tested subject areas were integrated with reading and writing. Specialists supported the instructional program by integrating reading, writing and math within their special area of music, art, and physical education.

Students performing at Levels II were challenged through curriculum compacting, independent research, and use of *Accelerated Reader.* The teacher for academically/intellectually gifted students shared resources with the regular classroom teachers so students were continually supported.

There was continual visible support and mentoring from the central office and board members. The area superintendent, curriculum directors, and supervisors visited the school to work with special area teachers. Central office provided training for teachers, most recently in the K-2 literacy program.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

Lockhart Elementary School was one of five elementary schools in Wake County to pilot the Student Accountability Standards and Promotion/Retention Policy. There was a heavy emphasis on parent involvement and sharing information on the standards and policies involving promotion and retention. Parent workshops, focus groups, and monthly newsletters were used to inform parents. Two parent/teacher conferences were held during the year for additional information on specific grade-level benchmarks. EOG Tracking Forms, developed by the teachers, provided parents with specific information on the progress of their student. Workshops were held to inform about end-of-grade tests, the accountability standards and the gateways. Teachers used a Parent/Teacher conference sheet (EOG Tracking Form) as a reference sheet to show parents what their child should be expected to do and how their child was progressing. There was constant communication from the entire school community about the accountability standards. Parents were notified early about their student's progress and are involved in the intervention efforts.

Closing the Achievement Gap

The principal worked with teachers to study and disaggregate test data the data to determine gaps in achievement for specific groups.

Professional Development

Lockhart Elementary School's faculty and staff cited relevant and focused staff development to meet the specific needs of the school community as very important. Staff development was included in the regularly-held faculty meetings to address such concerns as understanding test data, grade level expectations, the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*, and the accountability standards. Literacy assessment for K-2, writing workshops, and training the entire certified staff in rubrics for school wide grading of mock writing tests helped make all teachers accountable and responsible for student achievement.

The school also participated in Malcolm Baldridge Criteria training and the school improvement team operated within these established guidelines.

School Climate

The school climate was an inviting one with high morale among the faculty and staff. The principal and staff collaborate on goals as a school family. Successes were celebrated with parents and students through classroom and school-wide recognition activities. Students are rewarded with such activities as "Principal for a Day," Academic Banquet, and Awards Day programs.

The atmosphere supported a positive attitude and high expectations among all faculty and students. A school wide discipline policy was enforced by the faculty with routines and procedures in place. Students were aware of expectations, shared in the planning of school and classroom rules, and were rewarded through the Behavioral Honor Roll. A system wide Character Education Program was taught in the classroom with a monthly focus on specific character traits. Students repeated a 'Quality Pledge' as part of their morning routine.

The *Annual Report on School Violence* indicated two incidences involving one student who no longer attends the school.

MOUNTAIN VIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

106 Alphabet Lane
Morganton, North Carolina 28655
828.437.1584

Burke County Schools
Tony Stewart, Superintendent
Teresa DeHart, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Urban
Grade span at the school	PreK-5
Number of certified staff members	24
Number of classified staff members	15
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:15
Student attendance rate	97%
Attendance rate of faculty	75%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	7
Teacher turnover rate	29%

Student Population

Grade	Race/Ethnicity	Total Number of Students	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
PreK	16	African-American	69	34.4%
K	36	Asian	9	3.1%
1	26	Caucasian	90	43.2%
2	31	Hispanic	40	19.3%
3	35	Native American		
4	38	Other		
5	26			

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	124	62%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	3	8.0%
Asian		
Caucasian	35	90%
Hispanic	1	2%
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	4	17	11	3	4

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Principal	Reading teacher
First grade teacher	English as a second language teacher
Fourth grade teacher	Secretary
Exceptional children's teacher	

Leadership

Prior to arriving at Mountain View Elementary in 1999-2000, the principal had served as a middle school assistant principal and an elementary school principal in other Burke County schools for seven years. In her first year at this school, she assisted her staff in goal setting, helped them to remain focused on their goals throughout the year, and provided necessary resources for ensuring success. The principal reviewed lesson plans and grade-level agendas weekly encouraged posting of *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* objectives and countywide indicators, and ensured that pacing and curriculum guides were followed. She also communicated regularly with staff and parents through weekly newsletters and provided strong support for new teachers. Staff praised her for her resourcefulness and willingness to help. Described as "definitely not an armchair warrior," the principal was constantly in the trenches with both teachers and students. Not only did she visit classrooms regularly, but she also modeled procedures and practices for teachers, worked with a small group of fourth graders in reading, and met with all third through fifth-grade students individually to discuss their goals for the year. As a proactive leader, the principal supported a strong reading program, uninterrupted blocks of time for teaching core subjects, high time on task, data-driven instruction, and adequate time for planning. Staff also credited her with acquiring the services of a full-time guidance counselor at the school. Whenever the principal noted areas such as writing that needed to be strengthened, she began immediately to develop a school-wide plan for addressing the needs.

In addition to the principal's strong leadership, an empowered staff took ownership and provided leadership in many program areas (e.g., school-wide Title I reading, English as a Second Language, and Academically Intellectually Gifted programs) and at individual grade levels. Likewise, the central office provided leadership through initiatives such as countywide curriculum planning, ongoing assessments, relevant staff development offerings, and strong support for new teachers.

Parent Involvement

The school made many efforts to involve parents throughout the year. The reading specialist, ESL teacher, principal, and others conducted home visits. Staff and the PTO also planned activities to encourage families to visit the school. The Title I program held several meetings/parent planning sessions and two "make-and-take" workshops during the year. To keep parents informed, the principal's weekly newsletters, a monthly Title I newsletter with activities that parents could do with their children, and ongoing communications from teachers were sent home with students. For Hispanic parents, the ESL teacher translated these communications, surveys, and other information into Spanish. The school had a few regular classroom volunteers and others who helped with special projects. Staff expressed appreciation for those dedicated individuals who gave of their time to help at the school. However, when asked what one thing they would like to change about their school, the staff gave a resounding reply of "more parent involvement."

Curriculum and Instruction

The school attributed its success in student improvement during the 1999-2000 school year to several factors. As a Title I school, Mountain View had developed a school-wide reading plan that included multi-age grouping for grades K-2 and 3-5. Students were typically in their reading teams for 1.25 hours for guided reading and writing in the morning and for another 1.25 hours in the afternoon for content-area reading. Some teachers reported having success and high interest among students with the inclusion of novels and literature circles in their second reading block. Basal textbooks, trade books, and a variety of reading materials were used in classrooms. Teachers modeled a love for reading, asked higher-order questions using available question stems, provided consistency in teaching reading strategies school-wide, and supplemented reading instruction with a closely monitored *Accelerated Reader* program. A grant from the Morganton Housing Authority supplied the school with additional *Accelerated Reader* (AR) books and assisted in sponsoring a summer reading program.

The school had protected blocks of time for both reading and mathematics and consistently taught problem-solving strategies for mathematics. *Excel Math* was coupled with manipulative kits for math instruction at the lower levels. At the upper levels, however, *Excel Math* was the primary resource. *STAR Math*, the *Math Counts* competition, and compacting were used to accelerate learning for students performing at levels 3 and 4. The K-3 Discovery Program, whereby the AIG teacher met with students weekly, also afforded higher performing students an opportunity to be involved in special projects.

In addition to the Title I program, other remediation programs that contributed to the school's success included the Homework Room and the ESL Night School. The Homework Room operated after school Monday through Thursday for two hours daily, and the ESL Night School served both ESL and other at-risk students from January through April on Monday through Wednesday nights for 1.5 hours.

Staff felt that following the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* and countywide pacing guides in all subjects was instrumental in preparing students for end-of-grade tests. Within classrooms, teachers taught students techniques for problem-solving, self-monitoring, and independent thinking. *Blast Off*, *Test Ready*, *Buckle Up*, NCDPI testlets, and *Competitive Edge* were some of the test-preparation materials used by the school. Periodic assessments and use of the released forms of the end-of-grade tests also helped to prepare students. In addition, the school used appropriate testing modifications for qualifying students in their classrooms throughout the year; however, staff had high expectations for exceptional children and ESL students as well. Also, the media coordinator taught students test-taking skills for one class period each week.

Common planning periods, regularly scheduled grade-level meetings, hall meetings, monthly faculty meetings, and weekly newsletters facilitated curriculum articulation. In addition, specialists and teacher assistants tutored students and assisted with small-group instruction. All were integrally involved in helping students to learn. The ESL, Title I, EC, and AIG teachers shared strategies with classroom teachers and planned together with them.

The central office provided county benchmarks, "curriculum at a glance" documents, mid-year assessments, and other materials to aid teachers. A countywide initiative during the summer was to develop questions for science and social studies similar to those on the end-of-grade tests. Two literacy specialists and one part-time specialist were available to assist countywide with curriculum issues.

Curriculum integration, specific times for science and social studies, and the availability and use of numerous content-area reading materials ensured that subjects other than reading, writing, and mathematics were not neglected in the curriculum. The reading resource room contained packages with multiple copies of leveled trade books for classroom and small-group use. *Spider* and *Time* magazines, newspapers, and other materials were available for classrooms. *Math the Write Way* was a resource that one teacher found useful for integrating writing into the mathematics curriculum.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

Handouts, presentations at PTO meetings, teacher-parent conferences, and constant communications from the school helped parents and students to understand and prepare for the Student Accountability Standards. *Tuesday Tidbits*, the principal's weekly newsletter to parents, was an ongoing vehicle for communicating information regarding the standards. All materials were translated into Spanish. Teachers, parents, students, and the principal signed a compact of agreement that the standards had been explained and that all knew what was expected and what needed to be accomplished for the year. The testing coordinator prepared cards containing individual test results, and the principal used these in her individual conferences with students for purposes of goal setting.

Closing the Achievement Gap

Staff explained that the school had high expectations for everyone. Learning where students were and providing early interventions led to success in closing the achievement gap. According to the principal, African-American students were at 80 percent proficiency; Caucasian students were at 83 percent; and Hispanic students were at almost 99 percent proficient. The Title I school wide plan and annual data analyses also assisted in closing the gap since every student was closely monitored.

Professional Development

Staff development offerings were relevant and varied. In-service reading, writing, and mathematics workshops by the central office kept staff informed and supplied them with needed resources. Specific training was provided in the use of question stems, open-ended assessment, graphic organizers, and literature circles. Technology in-service included using the *Accelerated Reader* program, and writing questions for follow-up support for technology was available from the media coordinator and technology specialist. In addition, the county offered AIG certification by a trained employee; and Appalachian State University, with the school system's support, offered a Masters in Reading for twenty Burke County teachers. Staff members were also afforded opportunities to attend the At-Risk Conference, summer institutes, and other state and local workshops. Upon returning, staff had opportunities for sharing what they had learned with other staff members. Special-area teachers also willingly shared their instructional strategies with school staff. In addition, mentoring was encouraged at the school. In fact, one specialist was able to provide daily assistance in a new teacher's room for 30 minutes daily. Based on identified needs, other workshops were being planned for content-area reading, preK-5 writing, and computer-integrated learning. Additional on-site technology workshops had also been requested.

School Climate

Staff described the school climate as safe, positive, friendly, professional, and focused on goals. Students and staff respected one another, and very few discipline problems surfaced during the year. Teachers reviewed school handbooks with students and parents at the beginning of the year and asked that behavior compacts be signed and returned to ensure that all understood the policies and rules. The full-time counselor assisted students through efforts such as a peer mediation program, guidance lessons, and community visits to solicit volunteers. Big Brother and Big Sister programs, the DARE program, a grant for operating a school-wide PEACE Club after school, and the services of a countywide behavior specialist assisted in efforts to maintain a safe, positive, nurturing school climate.

NORTH CANTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

60 Thompson Street
Canton, NC 28716
828.646.3444

Haywood County Schools
Bill Upton, Superintendent
Steve Williams, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Rural
Grade span at the school	PreK-5
Number of certified staff members	33
Number of classified staff members	27
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:23
Student attendance rate	95.4%
Attendance rate of faculty	94.0%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	1.5
Teacher turnover rate	5.24%

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
K	77	African-American	6	1.4%
1	78	Asian	1	0.2%
2	75	Caucasian	431	96.6%
3	71	Hispanic	5	1.1%
4	84	Native American		
5	61	Other	3	0.7%

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	182	39.47%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American		
Asian		
Caucasian	33	100%
Hispanic		
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	2	9	5	6	11

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Principal	Fourth grade teacher
Lead teacher	Fifth grade teacher
Kindergarten teacher	Specialist
First grade teacher	Teacher assistant
Second grade teacher	Parent representative
Third grade teacher	

Leadership

In 1999-2000, the principal was in his fifth year as leader of North Canton Elementary. Prior to becoming an elementary principal, he had served in roles of teacher, coach, and assistant principal at the junior high and high school levels for 19 years. Staff praised the principal for the support, encouragement, and resources that he provided them. For example, he ensured that staff development needs were met through well-planned, quality staff development and additional funding for hiring substitutes that enabled teachers to participate. At the same time, the principal had high expectations for himself, his staff, and students. He monitored instruction through daily visits to all classrooms, periodic review of lesson plans and minutes from grade-level meetings, ongoing teacher evaluation, and analysis of nine-week test data. Teachers were required to have grade-level planning sessions at least once every ten days. In addition, the principal was proactive in his search for ways to improve the school. In fact, he suggested two significant changes to the master schedule for the 1999-2000 school year: the implementation of core time—an 80-minute, uninterrupted block of time for instruction in communication skills and/or mathematics—and blocked times for special classes, which created opportunities for individual and grade-level planning times for teachers.

Teamed with the principal, the curriculum specialist also provided strong support and leadership for curriculum and instruction. For example, she helped to locate resources for grades K-2, conducted demonstration lessons at all grade levels, and assisted with fourth-grade writing. The school improvement team was also actively involved in decision-making regarding the master schedule, curricular and extra-curricular activities, needed staff development, and school-wide projects.

Parent Involvement

North Canton had a supportive PTO and an active volunteer program. The Foster Grandparent Program operated in kindergarten through second grade. Grandparents who volunteered spent time in each classroom providing individual attention to at-risk students. The school communicated regularly with parents through memos, notes, and a monthly calendar. By the middle of October, every teacher had conducted an initial conference with all parents or guardians. Many teachers also sent home weekly and, in some instances, daily updates for parents. The school also involved parents through activities such as take-home reading, the Pizza Hut Book It program, the Family to Lunch program, and a writing workshop in which parents and students shared their stories and reviewed them together.

Curriculum and Instruction

Uninterrupted instructional time, grade-level planning, individualized instruction, a dedicated instructional staff, and high expectations positively impacted student achievement. Teachers emphasized higher-order thinking skills and questioning. In mathematics, the *Saxon Math* series had been piloted for the previous two years and was adopted for school-wide use in 1999-2000. Staff valued this series for its spiraling approach to mathematics instruction. The NCDPI's *Math Strategies* books and other available resources supplemented the school's mathematics instruction. Math manipulatives were commonplace and a starting point for much of the mathematics instruction. For reading, literature groups were often based on students' individual reading levels and included high-interest novels. The *Accelerated Reader* program supplemented classroom instruction in reading and allowed students to progress at their individual pace. In writing, students wrote daily from the first day of school, kept journals for both reading and writing, and shared their work with their peers, teachers, and visitors. Teachers modeled storytelling and the writing process and conferenced with students frequently. Writing assessments were also completed at the lower grades; and third and fourth-grade teachers teamed to score the papers. Peer tutoring, enrichment problems in mathematics, numerous projects, and more advanced literature selections were used to stretch students beyond where they were. Teachers used a variety of individual, small, and whole-group instruction.

Teachers prepared students for the end-of-grade tests first and foremost by teaching the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. Analyses of nine-week assessments (grades two through five) determined students' strengths and weaknesses; in turn, this information was used to guide instruction. In addition, teachers taught test-taking skills and test vocabulary, used testing and other modifications in classrooms, and conducted remediation classes for students performing at Levels I and II and low Level III. An in-school remediation program was held for targeted students for four or five weeks prior to the end-of-grade tests. The after-school remediation program was available for students in grades 3-5 from October through April. Classes in the after-school program were one hour each for two afternoons per week. In addition, volunteers, block students from colleges, and students from Pisgah High School tutored students. Specific resources that were used for test preparation included *Blast Off*, *Test Magic*, and released forms of end-of-grade tests. Staff also praised assistance that students received in the exceptional children's, academically gifted, and Title I reading programs, as well as the strong background that students received at the K-2 level.

The staff at North Canton kept abreast of curriculum changes and remained focused on teaching the curriculum through a variety of ways. For example, two school representatives served on the countywide curriculum council. The information learned and documents generated by or provided to this council were in turn shared with the school. Additionally, the principal and the curriculum specialist shared information with the staff that they learned from their monthly elementary principals' and weekly countywide specialists' meetings, respectively. Regular grade-level planning also ensured ongoing curriculum articulation. In addition, each grade level, including PreK-5, had focused correction areas (FCA's) in communication skills that were aligned to the curriculum. Likewise, all mathematics materials were aligned with the curriculum.

Periodic review of lesson plans and integrated units of study ensured that science and social studies were not neglected in the instructional program. The school provided needed content-area materials, including recently adopted textbooks and leveled trade books. In-service on the revised science curriculum and administration of the local-option social studies test at grades four and five also helped the school to keep focused on these subjects.

Specialists were involved in improving student achievement through the school-wide focus on the Focus Correction Areas (FCA's). They also practiced curriculum integration, tutored during the core block time, and planned with regular classroom teachers. Teacher assistants were actively involved with students during the instructional day.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

The school's parent orientation sessions at the beginning of the year were used to familiarize parents with the Student Accountability Standards. Also within the first six weeks of school, teachers held individual parent conferences during which they explained the standards and asked parents to sign an accountability contract. In individual classrooms, teachers also discussed standards and policies with their students. The school also disseminated NCDPI, system-wide, and school information that explained the standards and gateways. Additionally, Haywood County Schools sponsored radio and newspaper announcements regarding the standards.

Closing the Achievement Gap

North Canton conducted detailed analyses of its test data over several years to determine how effectively it was progressing with its goal of closing the achievement gap. Results indicated significant improvement in narrowing the gap. The school also met its goal of maintaining its exemplary status while also becoming a school of distinction, whereby 80 percent or above of its students performed at Levels III and IV. To perpetuate these improvements, the school practiced data analysis, individualized instruction, and remediation/acceleration efforts throughout the year.

Professional Development

Professional development offerings for the year included writing, technology, test-item analysis, and K-2 assessment workshops. The curriculum specialist, central office personnel, and outside consultants were available on-site to offer additional support after the initial staff development. In addition, the county and school provided strong support for new teachers. Several countywide grade-level meetings and specialists' area meetings were also held during the year to keep staff informed and to share strategies. Staff also had opportunities to attend a variety of national, state, regional, and county workshops, conferences, and meetings. One staff member also conducted writing workshops for other schools and school systems.

School Climate

Staff described the school climate as positive, friendly, caring, child-centered, and safe. At the same time, the annual parent survey results indicated that most parents were satisfied with the school's progress. School rules and policies were conveyed to students and parents and were consistently enforced. Character education was integrated into the curriculum. In some classes, students wrote their own classroom rules and decided on consequences. Student support personnel served on the school's CARE Team, and a full-time counselor visited each classroom biweekly and conducted individual and small-group counseling sessions. Staff members also sponsored an afterschool "latchkey" program until 6 p.m. daily. With these and many other initiatives in place, the school had no incidents of school violence to report. The prevailing attitude at North Canton was that students and staff alike were valued. Morale was high. As a result, the school worked together as a team. All felt that they were important contributors to the school's overall goals.

PINK HILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Central Avenue
Pink Hill, N. C. 28572
252.568.4176

Lenoir County Schools
M. Doug James, Superintendent
Diane Heath, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Rural
Grade span at the school	K-5
Number of certified staff members	34
Number of classified staff members	26
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:22
Student attendance rate	97%
Attendance rate of faculty	98%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	10
Teacher turnover rate	

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
K	79	African-American	73	14.2%
1	82	Asian	2	.39%
2	99	Caucasian	358	71%
3	90	Hispanic	70	14%
4	80	Native American		
5	76	Other	3	.5%

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	267	53%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	2	5%
Asian		
Caucasian	32	95%
Hispanic		
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	5	16	2	3	8

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

One principal	Two parents
Seven teachers	

Leadership

The principal has been administrator of the school for the past three years. She modeled professionalism, was flexible, and always open to discuss any concerns the staff had. She fostered a level of trust with the faculty by promoting an environment in which they could take risks and try new ideas and concepts. She demonstrated a high regard for teachers by empowering them to become school leaders and felt it best that decisions be made at the level of implementation. The faculty was kept informed of current educational research, effective instructional practices, and strategies. The school improvement team was truly a driving force in decision making. The principal invited teachers to decide issues regarding the budget, curriculum, and staff development, and she established high expectations for all.

The principal was also highly visible on a daily basis, monitoring classroom instruction and providing feedback to teachers. The principal was flexible and not bothered by positive changes. The faculty was stable. Teaching at the school was not seen as just a job; the faculty had a vested interest in the success of the school since they knew and cared about the small community.

Parent Involvement

Parents played an active role in the school in positive ways. Teachers reported that the strong support and involvement of parents in the students' education encouraged them. Teachers contacted parents on a regular basis for academic, disciplinary, and monetary assistance. The school had a very strong PTA which raised money for needed equipment and school supplies. Parent volunteers were also used as tutors, chaperones, teacher and office helpers.

Curriculum and Instruction

Everyone had high expectations for the students. Teachers believed that each student was capable of high standards of learning. They expected all students to reach their potential, and all students were given academic benchmarks to reach. All staff believed that all students could attain mastery of the essential school skills, and they believed they had the capability to help students attain mastery. Teachers, assistants, and parents worked one on-one with students when they were having problems learning material.

Many programs and resources contributed to the students' achievement and school's success. All students participated in the *Accelerated Reader* program to improve reading and comprehension skills. After reading books on their individual reading levels, students took comprehensive computerized tests to determine their level of competency. Teachers also used *Test Magic, Testlets, Blast-Off* and *Competitive Edge* throughout the year. Through the use of computer networking throughout the school and the Info Handler, they were able to pull up needed academic or personal information on individual students at any time or place in the school in order to make valuable decisions.

Through ongoing disaggregation of test data, teachers knew where students were academically, and instruction was planned accordingly. The staff taught the goals and objectives of the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* and focused on higher order thinking skills in reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies. Teachers set target goals for students. Students were provided individualized and small-group instruction from teachers, teacher assistants, and volunteers.

Students performing at Levels III and IV were challenged in many ways. Teachers prepared challenging lesson plans that used higher-level questions. They were encouraged to read *Accelerated Reader* books and take tests on their grade level or above. Resource materials were provided on the appropriate academic level to ensure that students performing at Levels III and IV were challenged. Students were also given relevant real-life examples to which they applied new learning.

Curriculum integration ensured that all subject areas were taught throughout the grade levels. Various staff meetings provided insight into the needs of other grades and staff. Teachers planned by grade-levels and across grade levels. Teachers analyzed the needs of their students, examined the expectations of the curriculum, explored various effective instructional practices, and set goals to create the best learning environment for the students. Informal school wide curriculum discussions about teaching and working with students helped them improve and prepare students for the next grade. Throughout the school, teachers worked together as a team and were dedicated to doing what was necessary to facilitate learning.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

Teachers shared the objectives of the curriculum and different grade-level expectations with parents and students.

Closing the Achievement Gap

The entire school worked together to improve student achievement. Individual student needs were diagnosed and addressed in the regular classroom. Students were provided focused individual and small-group instruction, and teacher assistants and parent volunteers provided additional assistance by tutoring individual students. Teachers also provided after-school assistance for students in need of remediation and focused on specific objectives.

Professional Development

Teachers participated in several workshops in order to learn how to use the Info Handler Program correctly. They were also involved in workshops on writing personalized education plans and stress management training.

School Climate

Teachers, students and administrators repeatedly lauded the nurturing environment of the school. The belief that every child could learn undergirded every aspect of instruction. School rules were posted throughout the school yet the atmosphere was relaxed and open. Instructional time was structured and focused on staying on task. The school was a safe, rural school with few incidents of disruptive behavior. Students participated appropriately in classroom activities and interacted appropriately with their peers. Teachers cared about students. Parents were kept informed of students' progress and were very supportive.

POE MONTESSORI MAGNET SCHOOL

400 Peyton Street
Raleigh, North Carolina 27608
919.250.4777

Wake County Public School System
William McNeal, Superintendent
Moria O'Conner, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Urban
Grade Span at the School	PreK-5
Number of certified staff members	29
Number of classified staff members	18.5
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:22
Student attendance rate	95%
Attendance rate of faculty	94%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	4
Teacher turnover rate	All new teachers are new positions due to expansion of program

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
PreK	45	African-American	143	41%
K	77	Asian	12	3%
1	74	Caucasian	186	53%
2	85	Hispanic	10	3%
3	65	Native American		
4	44	Other		
5	5			

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	105	30%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	23	7.3%
Asian		
Caucasian	29	92.7%
Hispanic		
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	6.4	8	6	5.6	5.3

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Principal	Assistant principal
Five pre-K teacher assistants	Three parents
Five pre-K teachers	Three teachers of students aged 6-9
One instructional resource teacher	One teacher assistant of students aged 6-9
Five teachers	

Leadership

The principal at Poe Montessori Magnet School has been a school administrator for 17 years, 10 of which have been at Poe Elementary. During the past five years, she charted the course for the development and implementation of a Montessori school, grades PreK-5. The year 1999-2000 was the first year of full implementation of the Montessori model. The principal was trained in the Montessori method as well as having a masters degree in teaching, a masters degree in reading and language arts, and administrative certification. She had experience at both the elementary and middle school levels.

The experience of the principal played a significant role in the organization and operation of the school instructional program. She set a common vision that the school embraced. As instructional leader, the principal saw her role as one who "...supports and respects the professional staff. They are the ones who make it happen. It is between teacher and child." Teachers saw the principal as one who led them to become "problem solvers and learn to mesh solutions and philosophy". Words such as empower, facilitate, support, inform and resource were used to describe the manner in which the principal assisted teachers. Teachers were encouraged and allowed to emerge as leaders for staff development, curriculum planning and sharing ideas. The principal and the assistant principal had high expectations for the staff and facilitated their growth as leaders who were capable of decision making. Administrators also oversaw instruction and made sure that things happened. The leadership team and the principal identified issues and challenges and the multi-grade teams work on the solutions.

The school was divided into multi-age teams at the primary (ages 4 & 5), the lower elementary (grades 1-3) and the upper elementary (grades 4-5).

Parent Involvement

Parents were involved in a variety of ways at Poe Montessori. They served as "school community volunteers" who provided a myriad of on-site and away-from-school services. Parents trained in "guided reading strategies" worked with children at all grades. They served as tutors, assisted in special instructional projects, performed clerical duties to free up the connections. Conferences with students assisted them in determining what tasks they have performed well and those that need further work. Flexible small groups were used in every classroom, and students were encouraged to participate in across-grade peer tutoring and cooperative learning activities. The instructional strategies used resulted in problem solving, data collection, and response in the form of "works" that the students created.

Weekly level meetings were held to provide time for teachers to discuss curriculum and instructional issues and share "great lessons." School-wide and level curriculum maps were developed to assist in the instructional planning process. Whole staff meetings were held where content area instruction is addressed across age/grade levels.

Teachers at Poe Montessori leveled trade books and novels and placed them in a book room so teachers across grades could find appropriate level materials for each child. Training in the *Reading Styles Inventory* and K-3 Literacy Assessment provided guidance for teachers working with many levels of readers. The instructional resource teacher (IRT) met weekly with all third grade students scoring at Level I or II and assisted them in 'think aloud' strategies to use while reading. Flexible writing groups were conducted for all fourth grade students, and a *Writer in Residence* program was available for both fourth and fifth grade students. Teachers sought and received assistance in K-3 mathematics assessment and best practices and made certain to include appropriate vocabulary in their instruction.

Understanding and Preparing for Student Accountability Standards

Parents of students attending Poe Montessori had multiple opportunities to learn about the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* and the Student Accountability Standards. Both day and evening parent meetings were held at the beginning of school and periodically throughout the year. Monthly newsletter articles addressed the standards and helped parents become familiar with the gateways. The school system and the school sent out informational letters to all parents. Parent and teacher conferences were held in which the math and reading assessment portfolio were shared with the parent. In addition, Wednesday morning meetings were held to keep assistants for working with children, conducted phoning for special events, operated the school store, assisted in making instructional materials (example: a classroom pond built in the center of an upper elementary classroom used for integrated science lessons), and provided monetary support. Poe did not conduct fund-raising activities, but instead relied on parent and community contributions.

Curriculum and Instruction

Poe Montessori Magnet School employed multi-age grouping with students assigned to a primary (ages 4 and 5), lower elementary (grades 1, 2, and 3) or upper elementary (grades 4 and 5) team. Students remained with the same teacher or team of teachers for two to three years. This organizational structure allowed the teacher to become very familiar with the needs of individual children and resulted in teachers having to "find the path" for only a small number of new students each year. The transition from primary to lower elementary and from lower elementary to upper elementary was bridged for each child through use of test data and meetings between teachers at each level.

Teachers at Poe Montessori Magnet described each other as strong education leaders. The philosophy of the Montessori Model led the staff to focus on the individual child and to "zone in" on what each child needed. This process required consistent monitoring or "observing the child" to determine next best steps. The challenge for the staff and leadership at Poe Montessori was to teach the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* while remaining true to the Montessori Model. The staff devoted a considerable amount of time to aligning the two physically and philosophically. This process was described as a necessary one that proved to be a positive experience. The result unified the staff in its beliefs about children and learning, and supported the viability of the Montessori Model within the framework of public education accountability.

In line with the Montessori philosophy, the teachers taught lessons that move from the concrete to the abstract. They were trained in learning styles theory and used information about individual children to make sure that each child's preferred learning style was addressed. All curriculum was taught in a unified or integrated fashion in order to help children see parents informed about the connection between the Montessori methods used for instruction and the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. Teachers were able to answer questions that arose due to their participation in the alignment of curriculum and teaching methodology.

Closing the Gap

Teachers at Poe Montessori Magnet School reported that focusing on aligning the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* with the philosophy of the school and quality schools training required them to take a hard look at what they were doing. As a result, the gaps in achievement among students became apparent. Even though differentiated instruction was a cornerstone of the Montessori Method, the process of aligning and mapping the curriculum resulted in more focused instruction. Administrators provided assistance in test data analysis and searched for solutions such as staff development activities, materials, and outside assistance.

The school's Accelerated Learning Program provided twenty extra days of instruction through a "Saturday School" for at-risk students. Communities in Schools provided mentors with curriculum work coordinated between teacher and tutor. Volunteer "Foster Grannies" from the community, the Loaves and Fishes Program, and a four week summer program funded through a partnership with Wake Medical Center all offered tutoring for Level I and II students. In addition, a "Problem-Solving Club" for at-risk male students met on Wednesday and focused on teaching personal responsibility and problem solving techniques. During the 1999-2000 school year, some children received tutoring on site by Sylvan Learning Center.

Professional Development

Professional development in the Montessori method was required of all teachers at Poe Montessori Magnet School. Initial training of 400 hours is basic and further training was provided as well. "Master teacher trainers" were on staff at the school and provided on-going staff development, discussion groups and written information.

All staff members at Poe Montessori were trained in the Baldridge Core Values Criteria and used the total quality tools to "determine what we are about, plan for continuous improvement, and analyze every area of the curriculum." These tools were used in small group sessions to examine research and to develop plans for individuals and groups. In addition, all were trained in the K-3 assessment for mathematics and literacy, learning styles using Marie Carbo's *Reading Styles Inventory*, writing instruction and "nailing" the prompt, scoring writing, mathematics assessment, Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), and disaggregation of test data.

School Climate

The Montessori method included a focus on peace making which has been used along with other strategies to provide a climate conducive to learning. Upon entering the building, one sensed an order and calmness to the school. Students and teachers felt safe and happy. Classes had meetings to discuss issues that were affecting their learning or behavior. A "peace rose" was available in each class for students to pass back and forth as they made peace with each other and solved problems. One of the results of the Baldridge training was that teachers selected to make problem solving a focus in all instructional sessions and in relationships among students. One teacher commented on how much had changed in the last few years. It has become "a peaceful, not angry place. Students feel safe." Other words used to describe the school climate include nurturing, cheerful, respectful positive, supportive, helpful, pleasant, welcoming, task-oriented, focused place.

SOUTH TOE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

166 S. Toe School Road
Burnsville, NC 28714-8551
828.675.4321

Yancey County Schools
Ivan Randolph, Jr., Superintendent
C. Ronald Kates, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Rural
Grade span at the school	K-5
Number of certified staff members	18
Number of classified staff members	7
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:23
Student attendance rate	93.4%
Attendance rate of faculty	93.9%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	1
Teacher turnover rate	5%

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
K	39	African-American		
1	26	Asian		
2	26	Caucasian	170	91.8%
3	35	Hispanic	15	8.1%
4	28	Native American		
5	31	Other		

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	90	48%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American		
Asian		
Caucasian	12	100%
Hispanic		
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	1	3		3	5

School Improvement Team Members

Media specialist	Kindergarten teachers (chair)
Resource teacher	PTO president (parent)
Fifth grade teacher	Teacher assistant

Leadership

The principal led South Toe School for six years. His previous administrative experience had been at the high school, middle, and community college levels totaling 32 years of leadership. He was also Principal of the Year for 1999-2000. During his administration, South Toe had been Exemplary all four years of the program and a School of Distinction the previous three years. The principal facilitated learning by ensuring that teachers had materials and facilities that they needed. He stressed the importance of aligning the curriculum with the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. He initiated after-school, small-group tutorial sessions to raise student achievement.

He ensured that teachers had assistance for improving student achievement. This was accomplished by facilitating ordering test preparation materials, and encouraging volunteers and paid tutors during and after school for both low achievers and those needing enrichment. He worked with students in activities such as Character Education which he introduced.

The principal implemented the initial licensing for new teachers. He encouraged all staff to help beginning teachers. He monitored instruction through teacher evaluation, visiting classrooms, and praising student work. He had high expectations for staff and students.

He guided the school improvement team in examining strengths and weaknesses to plan improvements in facilities, materials, and programs. He was well respected by staff, students, and the community.

Curriculum and Instruction

Teachers used *Accelerated Reader*, incentive programs such as "*Book-It*," tutors, after-school enrichment, computer programs like *Cornerstone* and *Knowledge Works*, Young Authors, Problem of the Day, D.E.A.R. (Drop Everything and Read), the N.C. Children's Book Award Program, book fairs, and reading pals to facilitate student achievement.

In addition to the materials named above, the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* guides the instructional program. Individual attention was given to each child's learning needs through an individualized learning plan. Teachers used North Carolina Department of Public Instruction testlets, *Blast Off*, and *North Carolina Coach* series to prepare students for the end-of-grade tests. Enrichment programs after school were made available for all students.

At-risk students were offered after-school enrichment by teachers, and tutors worked during the school day with small groups or one-on-one. Title I instruction was available in reading and math for students who qualify.

Math Masters, an after-school enrichment program, and computer math were offered for students achieving 70% in math. Teachers also used *Math Super Stars* and critical thinking skills activities to challenge these students. A county wide differentiated curriculum program was available for those who qualified.

All subject areas were taught and integrated with each other as much as possible. Students read and wrote in the content areas. The music and art teachers integrated lessons with the classroom curriculum as well.

All teachers were aware of the expectations and requirements of the other grade levels. Every teacher had a *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* for K-12. Teachers reviewed it regularly and worked well together to provide the best possible instruction for the students. Teachers and assistants developed a pacing guide for writing.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

A concerted effort was made by the principal, faculty, and staff to understand and prepare for the Student Accountability Standards. The principal attended regional DPI-sponsored workshops (fall 99) and several other workshops concerning this subject. Information gained from these workshops has been shared with faculty, staff, and parents on a regular basis. The third, fourth and fifth grade teachers attended a two-day DPI conference on developing PEPs in September 2000. They have developed PEPs for all Level I and Level II students.

Parents received information at PTO meetings and written correspondence with attached information produced by DPI. Each teacher had an individual conference with parents whose child scored at Level I or II. The review process had been established, and a committee to review cases had been selected. The staff believed they were prepared to implement the Student Accountability Standards.

Closing The Achievement Gap

The staff at South Toe Elementary felt it was very important to close the students' achievement gap. They wanted all students to succeed and to be proud of their accomplishments. They did many things as a school to meet this challenge. Teachers analyzed the previous years' testing data, and used this information to plan instruction. Each teacher tried to motivate and increase the children's self-confidence to make their school experience positive. A variety of test preparation materials were used: testlets, *Blast Off*, and *Reading Coach*. Third, fourth and fifth graders performing at Levels I and II were pulled out and given small group tutorial help during school time. Teachers stayed after school to tutor students one afternoon per week.

Teachers tried to make the after-school program interesting and creative by providing snacks, less formal study sessions, computer and hands-on activities, thinking and problem-solving materials. There was also an after school computer program for Level III and IV students who scored 70% or above on the end of grade. Thus, both groups of students were ensured a positive after-school experience. The students did not feel that tutorial help was a punishment, but a fun, learning, club-like experience.

Teachers worked at making sure students felt confident in test-taking skills. The students were given opportunities to practice test taking. The PTO provided refreshments on the morning of test days, and afterward students are given special field trips and activities for working hard and doing their best. All in all to close the achievement gap, the entire staff was committed to helping all students to do their best.

Professional Development

The faculty at South Toe Elementary participated in various staff development workshops and activities chosen to support the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study,* as well as to promote the implementation of new programs in education. The central office provided training in areas of technology and topics relevant to specific grade levels, e.g. K-2 assessments. The principal, librarian, guidance counselor, special education teacher, and secretary each participated in staff development activities for his/her specific specialty area. Staff surveys and end of grade test results were analyzed to further direct the staff development committee in the allocation of available funds. In addition to other activities, improving writing scores was a school wide focus for staff development. All teachers and assistants participated in a site-based writing workshop. Student writing samples were studied, and strengths and weaknesses were identified. Strategies designed to address each weakness were discussed for the development of a plan for a sequential progression of writing skills from grade to grade.

School Climate

South Toe Elementary School was a warm and inviting place where students, parents, teachers and staff treated one another with respect and dignity. It was a place of good communication where students, parents, and teachers shared ideas. The faculty and staff were highly concerned with providing the best possible learning environment for children. Additionally, people at the school showed concern and care for each individual person's well being. Help was provided on an individual basis whenever any student or staff member had a special need.

The school and community were close. The home and school communicated frequently through an active PTO, parental information concerning new programs, after-school academic programs, student accountability programs, and a variety of school activities. There was a school wide student celebration, fall festival, and other student recognition programs.

Parents were heavily involved in schoolwide activities, as well as in academic areas. Besides parents, there were many community resource people who helped meet the individual needs of children. There was a strong belief that parents, the community, and the school must work in partnership with the common goal of providing the best learning opportunities for students.

South Toe Elementary School was also a disciplined place where students felt safe and secure, and clearly defined rules of conduct were established. The school set very high expectations for its own performance and also for the students'. Through the Student Council, students were involved with various activities such as field day, book fairs, Veteran's Day, and many other activities.

During the course of the school year, the faculty and staff shared many social events. Staff recognized each other on Teacher Appreciation Day, Secretary's Day, Boss's Day, Christmas Dinner and social events at the beginning and end of each year. Faculty and staff communicated and interacted with each other while helping out with both academic and personal needs. By keeping focused squarely on the children's needs, the school fulfilled its mission of " Working Together for a Better World."

SPRING CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

1050 St. Johns Church Road
Goldsboro, NC 27543
919.751.7155

Wayne County Schools
Steve Taylor, Superintendent
Charles Ivey, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Rural
Grade span at the school	K-5
Number of certified staff members	41
Number of classified staff members	37
Number of lateral entry staff members	1
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:17
Student attendance rate	95.4%
Attendance rate of faculty	93.3%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	3
Teacher turnover rate	Very low

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
K	95	African-American	7	11.6%
1	131	Asian		
2	106	Caucasian	416	62.7%
3	116	Hispanic	146	22.0%
4	116	Native American	1	.1%
5	100	Other	24	3.6%

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	324	48.9%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	4	10.3%
Asian		
Caucasian	34	87.2%
Hispanic	1	2.9%
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	4	12	4	8	11

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Principal	Fifth grade teacher
Assistant principal	Guidance counselor
Two first grade teachers	English as a second language teacher
Second grade teacher	Second grade assistant
Third grade teacher	First grade assistant
Fourth grade teacher	P. T. A. President
Lay advisory council representative	

Leadership

The principal has been the administrative leader of the school for 12 years. He viewed his primary responsibility as a facilitator for the faculty and staff—providing access to the curriculum materials and professional development activities needed to ensure student achievement.

The principal and the curriculum committee provided instructional leadership. The principal set standards by being a good example as well as showing respect for teachers as professionals. Teachers were allowed instructional freedom and trusted to know the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* and achieve expectations. Teachers new to the profession were paired with a well-trained and effective mentor who provided direction for instruction, as well as informal talks and moral support. Duties were limited for new teachers.

The school improvement team focused on increasing time spent on academics, selecting curriculum materials, instructional programs, staff development, school climate, and the school improvement plan.

Items attributed to providing the greatest assistance in helping improve student achievement included ESL resource teachers, *Blast Off, The North Carolina Reading Coach,* an after-school remediation program, testlets, and the principal's leadership.

Additionally, the principal led the test data analysis process to identify strengths and areas of concern.

Parent Involvement

The school has an active PTA and a strong parent volunteer program. Parents and community members provided one-on-one and small-group tutoring. A parent volunteer coordinated the school's Super Star Math program. Parents served on the school's leadership team and advisory council.

Curriculum and Instruction

The curriculum committee sponsored paired grade-level meetings twice a year. Grade-level teams planned together using the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* as the essential guide along with pacing guides. Teachers of all subjects, tested and non-tested, were required to submit objectives .

Preparation for end-of-grade tests began the first day of school. All instruction was based on the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* objectives. Classroom assessments were designed using vocabulary and multiple-choice format used in end-of-grade tests.

Students were drilled daily in reading and math. The mathematics curriculum was supplemented with *Arithmetic Developed Daily* (ADD). The *Accelerated Reader* (AR) program enhanced reading skills.

Students with limited English proficiency worked extensively with the school's English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers. Classroom teachers and ESL teachers worked together to ensure that resource instruction supported regular classroom activities. Instruction for at-risk students was enhanced with hands-on instruction using computer-generated programs such as *Lightspan* in addition to in-school remediation and after-school tutoring.

All students received and were challenged with rigorous assignments. Level I and II students were encouraged to work harder. Level III and IV students served as peer tutors and were given additional projects based on areas of individual interest.

Curriculum support materials and staff development were provided by the central office.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

Wayne County Public Schools' central office has prepared *Making the Grade in Wayne County Schools - A Guide to Student Accountability Standards* outlining for parents the student accountability and standards, promotion and graduation requirements. In addition, a district Student Accountability Agreement was signed by the student, parents, and teachers outlining expectations for achievement and the responsibilities of the stakeholders.

The school sponsored TEAM (Together Everyone Achieves More) night to make parents aware of the learning objectives of each grade.

Closing the Achievement Gap

An analysis of test data was conducted to identify gaps in achievement levels of students by gender and race. Remedial help was provided for at-risk students who were mainly minorities. Students received extra practice time in the reading lab. Mentors were identified and trained to work with the students on academic and personal skills.

Professional Development

Because it was identified as an area needing improvement, staff development activities focused on writing. A writing consultant was secured to provide writing samples and practice in scoring student performance on writing prompts. Additionally, staff development was provided on how to use non-tested objectives to teach objectives that are tested.

School Climate

Students and staff enjoyed coming to school as evidenced by the high attendance rate. Students realized that school is a place to learn and to have fun. Parents and community were supportive of the school.

TIPTON HILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

RR1, Box 450
Green Mountain, NC 28740-9729
828.688.4853

Mitchell County School
Bill Sears, Superintendent
Dean Myers, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Rural
Grade span at the school	K-8
Number of Certified staff members	10
Number of classified staff members	3
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:15
Student attendance rate	90%
Attendance rate of faculty	excellent
Number of teachers new to this school last year	
Teacher turnover rate	

Student Population

Grade	Total Number Of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
K	8	African-American		
1	15	Asian		
2	12	Caucasian	113	98%
3	13	Hispanic	2	2%
4	15	Native American		
5	13	Other		
6	17			
7	10			
8	12			

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	91	79%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American		
Asian		
Caucasin	10	100%
Hispanic		
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21 +
Faculty Years of Experience	1	5	1	0	3

Leadership

The principal and teachers in this school saw leadership responsibilities characterized by knowledge of what teachers were presenting in the classroom and of the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* so that the two may be aligned. They also believed that the instructional leader must know the teachers' strengths and weaknesses in order to help them succeed.

The principal spent the year prior to becoming a principal working under a mentor principal and a university professor. There were weekly observations and written reports that were evaluated by both advisors.

The principal attended a Coach to Coach workshop led by NCDPI staff during his first year as a principal. He also received staff development from the county office. After several years as a principal, he attended PEP, the Principal's Executive Program.

The whole faculty in this small school served as the school improvement team. The team oversaw testing and gave the pre-test before parent conferences were held. It met with parents in parent-teacher meetings and for orientation throughout the year. Decisions were made by debate and consensus. If no consensus was reached, the issue was thrown out.

The principal visited classrooms to observe the teacher and talked to students to see what they are doing. He let teachers make decisions as much as possible. For example, they made requests for materials and supplies. The school improvement team weighed requests against the budget and made the decision to buy or not. Questions that were used includes: "Do we really need it?" "How much does it cost?" "What is the cost-benefit to the students?"

New teachers were assigned mentors and met often with them. The principal and the superintendent, both instructional leaders, provided additional support and mentoring. The teachers in this school worked closely so that new teachers experienced close-knit collegiality.

Teachers were prepared by workshops and training from the central office staff, from Mayland Community College and by in-school training by fellow teachers. The Teacher Academy held helpful meetings in Hickory.

The principal monitored instruction by observing regularly in classrooms; looking at report cards and mid-term progress reports; keeping up with phone conferences between teachers and parents; substitute teaching; talking to students; asking teachers what they are doing in the classroom; and asking lower grade teachers how they can help the middle grade teachers get ready for testing. In summary, frequent communication was required to monitor instruction.

Parent Involvement

Parents were very involved in the school and worked closely with the principal when the occasion required it. Parents volunteered to support classroom teaching and were involved in decision making. They were active in special events like the annual Fall Festival. Teachers felt that this is the parents' school.

Curriculum and Instruction

Communication was the key to curriculum articulation. In-school meetings occurred for middle grade teachers and for lower grade teachers. The central office hosted county wide content area and grade-level meetings. The principal asked teachers to know the curriculum for one grade level above and below their own. The entire staff frequently studied the whole curriculum picture.

Students were assessed and knew their own strengths and weaknesses, facilitating their responsibility for preparation. *Competitive Edge* was found to be useful. The teachers and students referred frequently to the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. Enrichment activities were provided as much as possible through field trips to nearby art centers and as far away as the Outer Banks. All students participated in these activities.

The school used mock tests three times per year. Incentives were provided to high-performing students and to improving low-performing students. Two students were declared the King and Queen for a day. Their reward was to be honored and to roam throughout the school, providing assistance for teachers. New reading and math software stimulated students performing at all levels. Teachers worked hard to identify needs of each student. The principal also credited the school's improving students to the use of testlets, good communication with the central office and a school decision to locate an assistant in the middle grade classes.

The school prepared a mid-term progress report after 4.5 weeks. Students at Level I or II, taking into consideration their previous work, were required to attend after-school tutorials, with the parents providing transportation. Other students attended as well. There was also a class for Level I and II students that use technology aligned with the end-of-grade tests. Lees-McRae College provided an Educational Talent Search program, which offered enriching activities. For example, when students scored 70% or better, they received a trip to Carowinds as a reward. In the primary grades, a program called First Steps used an assistant to provide 30 minutes of tutoring per day to at-risk children. In addition, all teachers knew where their Level I and II students were and provided extra one-on-one time for them.

A guidance counselor provided individual and group counseling, and teachers did an excellent job of finding time to talk to students. The principal reported there are very few children with behavioral problems, but the alternative learning program was available, if needed. The children in this community were said to know what the educational expectations were and were eager to meet them.

These students were challenged in an Advanced Learning Program, and all teachers at the school were proficient at providing enriching, challenging assignments and supplementary materials. Enriching activities were provided, such as field trips to Penland Arts School and to the Outer Banks of North Carolina.

Classes were held regularly in non-tested areas. The teachers followed the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. Social studies and science were not slighted. Teachers integrated subject matter into reading, writing and math. Reading teachers used social studies material, for example.

Non-certified personnel were the kindergarten assistant, the first grade assistant and a reading specialist who taught a special reading program. The latter person had direct input into improved student achievement.

Teachers met informally very frequently. In this small school, there was only one teacher per grade level; therefore, few special meetings were required. The faculty met weekly with the principal, and curriculum was discussed at these meetings.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

Students were reminded of the standards regularly. Parents were sent the ABC standards and the Gateways, and these issues were discussed at PTO meetings.

Closing the Achievement Gap - not an issue in this school

After each 4.5 weeks a mid-term progress report is produced, and after-school tutorials are begun. Students are selected to stay after school if they are on Levels I or II and by looking at their previous year's progress compared to the current year. There is a class for students at Level I and II that relies heavily on software that is coordinated with the end-of-grade tests.

Professional Development

Teachers received training from central office staff on teaching academically gifted and advanced learners. The local community college provided computer courses, and the central office and school staff provided training in PowerPoint and use of the Internet. Teachers attended *Creating Independence through Student-owned Strategies (CRISS)* training in Hickory provided by the Teacher Academy.

Teachers received help from three central office staff members who assisted with all curriculum delivery situations. The principal found workshops and send teachers to appropriate ones.

Sometimes teachers received coaching after in-service sessions; more frequently they shared with the larger faculty when they returned to school. There was a climate of sharing among teachers aided by the fact that there was only one teacher per grade level.

School Climate

Rules were posted in classrooms, and teachers reviewed them the first day of school. The handbook was also presented and explained. Clear consequences were made apparent. The teachers experienced few behavior problems with most students on grade level in their social development. Students worked hard to please the teachers.

The teachers and principal had high expectations for the students' behavior and achievement. They were also loving, accepting, friendly and encouraging to the students. There was genuine rapport between the adults and students in this school.

TRAMWAY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

306 Center Church Road
Sanford, North Carolina 27330
919.718.0170

Lee County Schools
Robert Logan, Superintendent
Gary Jackson, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Suburban
Grade span at the school	K-5
Number of certified staff members	39
Number of classified staff members	40
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:22
Student attendance rate	96.6%
Attendance rate of faculty	93%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	9
Teacher turnover rate	23%

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
K	110	African-American	104	17%
1	104	Asian	7	2%
2	93	Caucasian	423	69%
3	99	Hispanic	64	10%
4	94	Native American	6	1%
5	72	Other	6	1%
6	38			

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	218	36%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	1	2.5%
Asian		
Caucasian	37	95%
Hispanic	1	2.5%
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	3	9	7	4	16

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Chairperson	Principal
Three teachers	One instructional assistant
Two parents	

Leadership

The principal and teachers held different views regarding instructional leadership. As an instructional leader, the principal felt that he was responsible for being highly visible and allowing staff to be innovative. He also believed that the instructional leaders made provisions for cutting-edge technology. Furthermore, the principal insisted that instructional leadership involved the use of skills and knowledge to improve the school's total environment and to help students achieve maximum academic outcomes. On the other hand, teachers insisted that primarily the instructional leader influenced the overall direction of the school. Basically, they contended that this was done by setting goals and objectives, defining needs to reach these goals, and providing support and guidance to achieve positive outcomes.

Upon entering administration as an assistant principal, the current principal of Tramway Elementary School had an informal mentor. His mentor-principal delegated various duties. This approach allowed him to learn from his daily experiences. Consequently, he was given periodic feedback and guidance regarding the quality of his work. In spite of being mentored by a seasoned principal, he felt that he could have benefited from participation in a leadership academy when he entered administration.

Building level and central office administration offered assistance to help improve student achievement. Towards this end, the principal studied impact data and conducted grade-level meetings to discuss strengths and weaknesses, set high expectations, and worked tirelessly to secure funds. The principal also monitored instruction through direct classroom visits and informal observations from the hall. He enabled the teachers to coordinate with grade levels to determine student needs and helped implement strategies that positively impacted student progress. The principal also provided money to purchase a wide range of materials to address individual needs. In addition, the teachers indicated that the current posture of Lee County Schools provided invaluable assistance to improve student achievement. The school district implemented specific assessments in every grade. This promoted an environment of accountability on every level. More importantly, it produced an attitude of diagnostic prescriptive teaching on every level, which positively impacted student achievement.

The school improvement team made decisions about every facet of the school except for hiring new staff. Fundamentally, their decisions involved overall school improvement and the quality of instruction. The principal relied heavily upon staff involvement in the decision making process. Primarily, however, the school improvement team impacted budgetary issues.

In an effort to improve student achievement, the principal functioned as a motivator and encourager. He supported teachers as they tried new instructional strategies. He also shared test data and helped devise strategies to strengthen academic achievement. In addition, he made provisions for related staff development activities, which were geared towards improving student achievement.

New teachers were provided considerable assistance. Near the beginning, they were assigned a mentor, a veteran teacher, at the building level. They also received assistance from the principal. Basically, the principal provided needed support during this adjustment period. Besides these, new teachers benefited from interactions and exchanges during grade level meetings and teams. Effective Teacher Training was provided by central office.

The principal monitored instruction. He visited classrooms every day. He observed lesson plans and assured that instruction was aligned with the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* and school district expectations. The principal also developed a scope and sequence that teachers followed.

Parent Involvement

Parents were actively involved in Tramway Elementary School. Staff insisted that a high level of parent involvement contributed to the success of the school. They participated in a wide range of school-related activities, such as HOSTS, SWISH, Book Fair, Healtharama, and field days. Parents also served as tutors, mentors and fundraisers. They took part in a considerable number of classroom-related projects. In some instances, they worked directly with students in groups and one-on-one. Aside from individualized involvement, Tramway Elementary School had an active PTO. This organization sponsored numerous events throughout the year, such as a Mega Yard Sale, Sock Hop, Food Lion Community Days, Tramway Apparel Sale, Spring Carnival, and the PTO Thrift Store. A parent contributed, created and maintain a beautiful courtyard flower garden on the campus.

Curriculum and Instruction

The principal ensured that grade levels addressed developmentally appropriate expectations for all students. Time was allotted for teachers to collaborate about what was important to know and do at each grade level. Curriculum was managed as a whole with teamwork and system wide awareness. Policies were implemented in all grades with site-based decisions. Grade levels coordinated and shared across grade levels. Scope and sequence were used.

Various strategies were used to help students prepare for the end-of-grade tests. Sample tests were often used to help students to become better test-takers. Since emphasis was placed on early intervention, focused intervention plans were also developed to help students. Additionally, teachers were apprised of various strategies through professional development activities. For the most part, the same strategies were used to help exceptional and limited English proficient students prepare for the end-of-grade tests. Limited English proficient students experienced pullouts and immersion. Some exceptional children, however, were exempted from these tests. Exceptional children and limited English proficient students also received extra language and reading instruction if they qualified.

A number of programs and strategies impacted student achievement at Tramway Elementary School. As a basic strategy, reading, math, and writing were integrated into every subject with the purpose of improving student performance. The *Accelerated Reader* program also fostered confidence within the students and heightened their abilities. In addition, an emphasis on critical thinking and higher-order thinking skills has also influenced achievement. *Junior Great Books* and *Thinking Maps* were used to help develop and enhance these skills.

Instructional remediation programs and practices were available to at-risk students. These included Just Read, Bridging the Gap, and *Accelerated Reader*. With a school wide focus on early intervention, the Cunningham *Four Blocks Literacy Program* was used in grades K-2. At-risk first grade students received focused intervention through the Just Read Program. At-risk second grade students participated in the HOSTS Program, which is a structured, one-on-one, adult-volunteer mentoring and tutorial approach. Upper grade at-risk students had individualized FIPS (Focused Intervention Plans), and teachers and assistants worked one-on-one with them and in small groups. As a fundamental practice, students with the greatest need were served first. Aside from these, after-school and tutorial programs were also offered. Since Tramway is a targeted Title I assistance school, students who qualified for assistance received help from a literacy instructor through inclusion as well as small-group instruction.

Behaviorally at-risk students received services from the school counselor. They were referred to the exceptional children's program when necessary. Like all other students, they received Character Education. A number of students were given a Behavioral Improvement Plan (BIP). Additionally, some behaviorally at-risk students stay on campus in a supervised setting away from the classroom.

In an effort to challenge students who were performing at Levels III and IV, teachers used the *Reading Renaissance* and differentiated programs in the classroom. Other strategies included scheduled AIG resource classes, the use of individual student contracts, emphasis on higher-order thinking skills, and the use of the Socratic method. Teachers also conducted demonstration lessons and pullouts. Furthermore, the principal assured that teachers had resources to meet their needs.

Efforts were made to assure that non-tested subjects were not neglected. To accomplish this aim, the principal encouraged curriculum integration, the use of scope and sequence, and the consistent use of lesson plans that were aligned with the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. Teachers also used a wide variety of materials for reading practice. Besides these, teachers emphasized content area materials.

Elective and non-certified staff were engaged in improving student achievement through curriculum integration and scope and sequence. All teachers developed scope and sequence. Core teachers developed this road map during the first quarter. They gave it to non-core teachers to integrate into their plans. Staff also used small-group practices, participated in enrichment activities, provided clerical support for upper- grade teachers, and performed duties that allowed more planning time.

Teacher collaboration and teamwork took place at Tramway Elementary School. Schedules were arranged to allow teachers time for planning and collaboration. Staff participated in weekly grade level and periodic across grade-level meetings. All grade-level teachers had classes and planning periods at the same time. Teachers worked as a team and collaborated after school and on workdays.

Considerable technical assistance was received from the central office. Directors and other staff promptly responded to requests. Staff development opportunities and financial support were often availed. In addition, the school received support through clearly defined guidelines.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

Efforts were launched to help parents and teachers understand the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* and the Student Accountability Standards. Several parent information sessions were held at night for this purpose. Similar discussions were held during PTO meetings. Information was also sent to parents along with report cards. In addition to the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* and the Student Accountability Standards, Lee County Schools has a standard for accountability which was used at Tramway Elementary School. The school district also has a Student-Parent-School Accountability Agreement which involves informing parents of expectations and consequences.

Closing the Achievement Gap

In this school, a modest achievement gap was identified. It was less than the gap that was revealed in the county and the state. Analysis was based on the prior year's results to determine which groups lagged behind. Consequently, focused intervention was applied to help close the achievement gap. *Reading Renaissance* was also used. Several other strategies were launched to close the gap. The principal encouraged the use of reading groups, technology, word attack, comprehension skills, multi-step problem solving, direct focus intervention instruction, site vocabulary words and literacy groups. During grade-level meetings, teachers analyzed achievement gaps and related factors. Afterwards, they developed strategies to close the gap.

Professional Development

Several professional development opportunities focused on strengthening reading, math and writing proficiency as required in the ABCs. Various inservice trainings were provided to promote higher-order thinking, multi-step problem solving, open-ended questioning and purposeful writing. For the most part, these professional development activities included *Reading Renaissance, Thinking Maps, Junior Great Books, Paideia,* "How-To" Sessions, Gateways, SACs Facilitation, Principal's Executive Program, and technology sessions. Several professional development activities were used to help teachers to better prepare for improving student achievement. These included activities regarding safety, phonics, writing, technology, group dynamics, *Lexile* Book Leveling, and *Reading Renaissance.*

Some professional development activities were devised to assist teachers in working with Level I and II students. Teachers learned how to utilize *STAR* to identify individuals with learning needs. Staff development also involved the reorganization of some focused intervention activities. Supplementary training was offered to help teach guided reading.

In an effort to assist teachers in working with Level III and IV students, some teachers sought enhanced licensure status. Additional teachers planned to take courses towards AIG licensure. Aside from these efforts, *CRISS* Training and *Thinking Maps* were offered.

After a teacher participated in a professional development activity, the teacher often led in implementing the strategy or provided related training. The principal enabled the teacher and facilitated positive change. Staff also shared new skills and strategies through demonstration lessons and reviews during staff meetings.

School Climate

Tramway Elementary School's climate was described as friendly, inviting, safe and secure. This climate was fostered so that students could be successful learners in a nurturing and positive environment. The school welcomed all visitors.

In an effort to assure that all children knew the rules and consequences, all students were provided a student handbook when they entered school. Staff reviewed the information during class. The student handbook was also sent home to parents for their knowledge and support. The school embraced Lee Canter's assertive discipline philosophy. Classroom rules were set, consequences were clearly defined, and a letter explaining each class plan was sent to parents. In turn, parents signed a portion of the letter and returned it to the school. The principal provided support for disciplinary sanctions. On the other hand, the good behavior program was offered, which emphasized positive consequences of outstanding behavior. Award recipients were announced and recognized.

Several strategies/programs were used to provide a safe, orderly, and caring school environment. Strategies included good behavior awards, character education, and security cameras. Again, data regarding school satisfaction were gathered through surveys from parents, staff and students. Safe schools surveys were completed yearly by staff and students. Results were studied and discussed to address areas of concern and to continue to search for innovative ways to improve the school climate. To ensure safety, security cameras were installed and staff wore identification badges. A crisis plan was in place. A traffic control officer also monitored safety.

Counselors, social workers, psychologists, and other support staff served on the team that developed the safe school plan. They also played an integral part in the Pupils and Adults Learning and Sharing (PALS) program for at-risk students. Strong organization of daily routines and a security measure involving parents and staff were in place. Additionally, these support personnel helped minimize barriers to learning and reduced negative social outcomes for students. Besides these, they helped parents solve problems, which affected students' comfort and safety within the school.

No serious behavior problems, crimes, or acts of violence were found within the school. The most common problem involved students who failed to follow classroom rules and teacher instructions. On the other hand, the most serious behavior problems at Tramway School involved foul language on the bus and disrespectful attitudes in classes.

WINTER PARK MODEL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

204 S. McMillan Avenue
Wilmington, NC 28403-5251
910.350.2159

New Hanover County
John Morris, Jr., Superintendent
Joyce Huguelet, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Urban
Grade span at the school	K-5
Number of certified staff members	24
Number of classified staff members	20
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:23
Student attendance rate	95.66%
Attendance rate of faculty	96%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	1
Teacher turnover rate	4%

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
K	53	African-American	66	21%
1	65	Asian	1	
2	65	Caucasian	245	78%
3	58	Hispanic	1	
4	40	Native American	2	1%
5	35	Other	1	

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	90	28.6%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	2	10%
Asian	1	5%
Caucasian	17	85%
Hispanic		
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	4	10	2	2	5

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Principal	Two third grade teachers
Assistant principal	Two fourth grade teachers
One second/third grade teacher	Two fifth grade teachers
Two kindergarten/first grade teachers	Teacher assistant
One kindergarten teacher	PTA president
Custodian	Three exceptional children teachers
First grade teacher	PE teacher
First/second grade teacher	Art teacher
Second grade teacher	Speech specialist
Cafeteria representative	Counselor

Leadership

Since the school's reopening as a model school four years ago, Winter Park Model Elementary School has been under the leadership of a principal who has modeled and encouraged the staff, both certified and classified, to focus on researching and implementing the best teaching practices. She provided a forum via study groups to share current research and strategies, as well as to evaluate the implementation of strategies. The principal demonstrated instructional leadership as she interpreted data from nine-week benchmark tests and talked with teachers individually and collectively in order to assess the needs of students. This was one means of monitoring instruction. Additionally, whether found observing classes or conducting a special interest class in gardening, the principal was visible and attuned to what was going on in and around the school. The principal spent many years in the county as a staff development coordinator which prepared her for the role as instructional leader. Preserving and enriching instructional time were paramount and guided decisions made by the school improvement team, which included all teachers. The instructional leaders empowered teachers to make decisions and impact programs that served children best.

Parent Involvement

Parents were active in the school as tutors during and after school and as assistants in classrooms. They also helped to maintain the grounds and provided support to the instructional program in any way. Rather than sell items, funds were raised by the PTA from donations that were used to finance field trips and provide teacher scholarships. Parents internalized the school's philosophy to celebrate all children and provided, along with business partners in the community, ice cream for all of the children every Friday.

Curriculum and Instruction

Collaboration and teamwork within and across grade levels were evident in planning meetings and peer observations among teachers.

Planning meetings often were clustered with kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers and third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers planning together. This collaboration also allowed for flexible grouping of students across grades three through five, particularly in mathematics. Because students in these grades were taught mathematics during the same block of time, mathematics scores soared as a result of small, flexible groups. Teachers of exceptional children planned with grade-level teachers to ensure the consistency of effective strategies.

Best teaching practices throughout the year prepared students for the end-of-grade tests. Teachers understood and applied learning theories and developmentally appropriate practices that met the needs of diverse learners. Their philosophy was to keep learning exciting as they created lessons aligned to the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. To this end, non-tested subjects were naturally integrated in lessons inclusive of projects, manipulatives, and extensive hands-on learning experiences. It was apparent that reading, writing, and mathematics were of special emphasis in the creative games that children played in their physical education class.

Teachers and assistants took responsibility for the learning of all students by tutoring students who were not in their classes or grades. Numerous opportunities existed to allow students to read, think, talk, and reflect. As examples, students participated in Drop Everything And Read (D.E.A.R.) and read to buddies in lower grades.

Cooperative learning, limited use of direct instruction (SRA) and *Accelerated Reader*, the *North Carolina Coach* series, and *Blast Off* were some of the programs utilized to reinforce skills learned in the classroom. To continually challenge students performing at Levels III and IV, enrichment classes were offered once a week, as well as the SAGE Program.

Personnel from the central office were no strangers to the school. They offered staff development and other resources and material pertinent to the school's success in student achievement.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

Parents, too, were responsible for student learning and learned about the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* at informative coffee sessions with the principal, at PTA meetings and grade-level parent meetings, from brochures and other written communication sent home with the students. These were also means by which parents were apprised of the Student Accountability Standards. Students came to understand the Student Accountability Standards from class discussions which played a key role in conferences with parents and teachers. It was clear that expectations were high for students, and they were aware of their responsibility for their learning.

Closing the Achievement Gap

As a result of attending to the data, the staff at Winter Park Model Elementary did realize that an achievement gap existed, particularly between the white and minority students. Yet, they began addressing the issue prior to its becoming one of statewide emphasis. Tutoring sessions during and after school were offered to students scoring below the level of proficiency. Small, flexible math groups and direct instruction were some of the strategies already in place to reduce the achievement gap. "All Means All" was the motto that supported the efforts underway at the school.

Professional Development

In the spirit of cooperative learning, much professional development took place during staff meetings set up to share current research in effective teaching practices. Quite often professional development workshops were conducted by teachers who had attended sessions elsewhere and returned to share new information with colleagues. Some of these professional development workshops focused on addressing the needs of diverse learners and multiple intelligences. All were presented to improve student achievement as required in the ABCs.

School Climate

The mission statement of the school was posted throughout, yet rules and consequences were personalized in each classroom. Overall, the school exuded positive energy and was an enjoyable place to be. This climate was based on the sentiment of high expectations for all and the expectation to improve daily. The result was that no serious behaviors problems were cited. The full-time counselor provided sessions in esteem-building and conflict resolution. Students often mediated their own conflicts at "the peace table." Winter Park Model Elementary has always re-invented itself, rethinking ways to improve continuously. It may be an old school with a new staff, but their emphasis on learning was fresh as they continued to research and implement the best teaching practices to positively impact student achievement.

Most Improved Schools
9-12

CURRITUCK COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

4203 Caratoke Highway
Barco, North Carolina 27917
252.453.0014

Currituck County Schools
Dr. William L. Dobney, Superintendent
Allison Sholar, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Rural
Grade span at the school	9-12
Number of certified staff members	84
Number of classified staff members	12
Number of lateral entry staff members	5
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:11
Student attendance rate	92.9%
Attendance rate of faculty	
Number of teachers new to this school last year	4
Teacher turnover rate	21%

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
9		African-American	93	11.3%
10		Asian	4	.4%
11		Caucasian	704	85.8%
12		Hispanic	9	1.0%
		Native American	5	.6%
		Other	5	.6%

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	160	19.5%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	7	7%
Asian		
Caucasian	89	93%
Hispanic		
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience					

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Vocational director	Four parents
Curriculum coordinator	Six teachers
Counselor	

Leadership

The principal was in her first year at Currituck County High School. Previously she had been principal of a high school in a nearby county. She believed in having a vision for the school, a plan to accomplish it and in creating a close focus on achievement. Her strategies included: keeping people informed, making them feel a part of the decision-making process, and showing appreciation for teachers while addressing each individual's strengths and needs to improve. She promoted a friendly climate, developing school spirit among students and parents, and creating a close knit environment. She believed in school being fun for students and teachers, and in using technology to do things better. The principal had a time line for getting things done, the desire to improve personnel, and a philosophy that included enjoying the children, having fun doing her job, and encouraging the staff to "not forget why we are here". She often visited classrooms and gave feedback on instruction to teachers. The central office provided initially licensed teachers with training. A regional group of high school principals that met periodically provided her with professional discussions and support.

Parent Involvement

The active participation of parents in the school was illustrated by the four of them who were involved on the school improvement team. Parents were openly welcomed in the school and encouraged to participate in activities that built school spirit. Currituck County High School was the only high school in the county. Community members saw it as representative of their region's upward progress. They expressed pride in the school's achievements. The feeling of ownership of the parents and the community helped the school in acquiring resources.

Curriculum and Instruction

Departments met as least once a month. They considered the goal summary results from the previous year's end-of-course tests and made plans for instructional improvement. They revised pacing guides and wrote lesson plans. English I and English II were year courses in the 4x4 block schedule. Reading, writing and vocabulary were stressed across the school's four years of English. In ninth grade students focused on genre, learning terms, and applying grammar. Exceptional children were included in regular English classes. Basic, academic and honors sections rotated use of the same novels. The high school and middle school teachers met and coordinated literature choices and textbooks. Teachers from both schools worked together to score county writing papers. Students in the county were given quarterly writing assessments from grade three to grade 10. Eighth, ninth, and tenth grades wrote literary analysis papers. Webbing was used to teach writing. Research skills training began in ninth grade. Students used their research knowledge across the curriculum in ninth through twelfth grades.

Science teachers integrated their curriculum with English. The math department taught a competency math, a Pre-algebra, Algebra part 1, and Algebra part 2 for entering students who needed extra support to be successful. A cutoff score of 77 was used for advancing to the next level. Geometry was taught over two semesters. The information highway was used for upper-level math. At the end of the courses, reviews were treated as units of instruction. Vocational and science teachers integrated their subject matter with math.

ELPS was taught at the twelfth grade. In U. S. History first semester covered up through the Civil War and Reconstruction. Second semester completed the course.

Teachers worked together in teams to make quarterly tests. Learning styles, hands-on activities, and strategies relevant to students today were used to help students learn. Social studies department members met once or twice a month to share information and to check on pacing. The science department also met regularly and coordinated their teaching. Informal sharing took place at lunch. The department integrated subject matter with math and English.

Currituck County adopted local benchmarks including a required score of 70 on the converted scale score to pass any of the end-of-course subjects. Nine-week assessments were encouraged in all courses. Disaggregation of test data drove instruction. The local alternative school was abolished and the high school got an advancement center. Emphasis was placed on assessment and the use of results to improve achievement. Three teachers and two assistants worked there to help students learn. A *PLATO* lab was established and students had access to

NOVELL on the internet. They improved in Algebra I, earth science, and geometry by using the software at school and at home. *Basic Learning Skills* software was used to enhance reading comprehension. The advancement center was open before, after, and during school. Students attended different periods depending on individual need. The school cut back on the number of field trips away from school. Language arts, math, and exceptional children teachers taught across grades. The faculty congregated informally at lunch, built assessments together and shared teaching ideas. Transition strategies addressed ninth grade assimilation in the school.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

The local school system instituted local benchmarks for students. On end-of-course tests a converted scale score of 70 was required for the student to pass the course. Information has been disseminated to parents and the community concerning the state benchmarks including the high school exit exam.

Closing the Achievement Gap

Data from end-of-course exams were disaggregated. Strategies to address different student needs were planned. Assessment during the year informed teachers of different students' achievement and was used to improve instruction.

Professional Development

The English teachers had staff development in using webbing to teach writing. From their experience they adopted a philosophy of continuous development of writing skills with quarterly assessments. The administration promoted realistic and relevant professional training. Teachers from schools in other counties came to the high school to share teaching strategies. Emphasis was on active learning. Technology staff development helped teachers integrate in their courses. Several teams of teachers attended the Teacher Academy and shared ideas with the faculty when they returned.

School Climate

The administration made communication with students and their involvement in school important. Clubs met after school. Attempts were made to serve all students even though some of them rode an hour or more each way to school. The principal was open to talk with students. Teachers were very concerned and professional. They addressed individual student needs. The friendly, close-knit environment with emphasis on student achievement was a preventive method that worked to minimize disruptions.

ELKIN HIGH SCHOOL

334 Elk Spur Street
Elkin, North Carolina 28621
336.835.3858

Elkin City Schools
Stephen Laws, Superintendent
William H. Gatewood, Principal 2000-2001
Jerry Swaim, Principal 1999-2000

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Rural
Grade span at the school	7-12
Number of certified staff members	49
Number of certified staff members	5
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:12
Student attendance rate	96.4%
Attendance rate of faculty	97%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	4
Teacher turnover rate	11.1%

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
7	84	African-American	26	5.9%
8	73	Asian	383	86.7%
9	66	Caucasian	21	4.8%
10	72	Hispanic	1	.2%
11	74	Other		
12	72			

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	445	12.9%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American		
Asian		
Caucasian	48	98%
Hispanic	1	2%
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	6	6.5	12.5	5	19

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

- Curriculum committee chair
- Planning committee chair
- Communications committee chair
- Parent
- Staff development committee chair
- Principal
- Assistant principal
- Budget committee chair
- School climate committee chair

Leadership

The principal for the 1999 - 2000 school year, now retired, set the tone for the faculty, staff, and students. A firm believer that his faculty and staff were professional, hard working folks, he allowed them to make decisions and implement practices they thought were good for students. Not afraid of taking risks himself, he encouraged his staff to do the same. The students, faculty, and staff all praised the principal as an effective, fair, and "thinking out-of-the-box" instructional leader. If resources were needed at the school, the principal found a way to obtain them. He was extremely supportive of his staff and the needs of his students. Instructional monitoring occurred on several fronts. Grade level chairs and department heads kept the principal informed of the progress of the students through the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study.* In addition, interim assessments were administered and regular classroom observations were conducted.

Parent Involvement

Elkin High School has a long, established history. A wall near the school entrance has class group pictures displayed beginning with classes from the early 1920's. Many of the students share in the traditions of their parents and grandparents. When it was decided it might be necessary to build a new facility, the parents and community insisted the site remain where it was. Therefore, renovations to the existing building and new additions were made at the existing site. School administrators and teachers indicated parent involvement was both high and positive. Parents support the school with time, resources and financial contributions.

Curriculum and Instruction

The teachers follow pacing guides aligned with *the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.* The teachers in grades 7 and 8 share a common facility and have opportunities to articulate the curriculum. The high school staff followed a 4X4 block schedule, and semester exams are administered before Christmas vacation. Teachers prepared review guides to help students with End-Of-Course and End-Of-Grade tests. Tutorial programs were established after school to help students performing below Level III. Students were administered numerous practice tests using *Test Magic*, teacher-prepared mock tests, released tests along with practice writing tests.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

The central office took a lead role in preparing staff and parents with the new accountability standards. Teachers received staff development to help them understand the timeline and standards. The schools have offered parents several opportunities for helping them understand the new accountability standards.

Professional Development

The staff development opportunities offered to the faculty at Elkin High School were both school-wide and grade or subject-specific. Teachers were offered opportunities to attend state conferences. School-wide staff development opportunities included using disaggregated test data for driving instruction, thinking maps/graphic organizers, and pacing guide development.

School Climate

The climate at Elkin High School was generally described as cordial. Additional descriptors included, "business-like with a heart," "a caring place," and by a student as "a place where you feel welcomed." High expectations are held for both students and faculty. Being a small school in a small town, there is a family sense about the school. The principal described the school climate as a partnership between community, students, and school.

THE GOVERNOR MOREHEAD SCHOOL

(for Blind or Visually Impaired Children)
301 Ashe Avenue
Raleigh, North Carolina 27606
919.733.6381

Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Early Intervention and Education
Fay G. Agar, Superintendent
Robert Patterson, Director
George Lee, Principal

The school serves children from all 100 counties in the state.

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Grade span at the school	K - 12
Number of certified staff members	35
Number of classified staff members	17
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil ratio	1:4
Student attendance rate	90%
Attendance rate of faculty	90%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	
Teacher turnover rate	

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
K - 12	32	African-American		40%
		Asian		
K - 12	53	Caucasian		60%
		Hispanic		
		Native American		
		Other		

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	85	100%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	7	20%
Asian		
Caucasian	28	80%
Hispanic		
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	0	7	14	7	7

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

First grade teacher	High school cooperative program teacher, (Wake County Public School System)
Second grade teacher	Middle school mathematics teacher
Fourth/fifth grade teachers	Two administrators

Leadership

The Governor Morehead School is the only school in North Carolina that specializes in a comprehensive educational and residential program for blind and visually impaired students. Services are provided for students from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade and are at no cost to their families. Many of these students are not only blind or visually impaired, but have other handicapping conditions as well. The administrators, certified teachers and staff are committed to providing educational programs that are suited to the specific needs of each child.

The school's administrators, along with the assistance team from the Division of Early Intervention and Education (DEIE), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), provided leadership and support for teachers who followed the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. In that this was the first year that schools in the Division of Early Intervention and Education (DEIE) participated in the ABCs Accountability Model, administrators found it necessary to mentor and assist the staff in overcoming anxieties regarding academic expectations for blind and visually impaired students. Demonstration lessons and additional classroom support provided by the assistance team helped teachers to analyze and modify teaching/learning strategies. Frequent and consistent classroom monitoring led to increased focus during class time.

A mentor program was in place for new staff members. One administrator perceived her role as being that of a "job coach" who collaborated with teachers to plan and deliver instruction, as well as locate the necessary additional materials and support for them.

Parent Involvement

Frequent contact was made with parents through the school's parent teacher organization, telephone calls and numerous mailings. Parents were invited to visit the school for conferences and many of these visits coincided with student performances. Parents were encouraged to become a supportive and integral part of their child's education whether it was on campus or at home. Because of the travel distances between homes and the Governor Morehead School, many parents were unable to serve as volunteers and tutors. Therefore, they were encouraged to network with other parents, serve as advocates for their children, and help their children experience personal growth and fulfillment along with academic success.

Curriculum and Instruction

To teach the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* was not only the expressed goal, but was also the implemented goal. Expectations were high and the certified staff was keenly aware that it would be accountable for teaching and learning. In other words, there would be no excuses. Teacher assistants and other staff persons supported this effort in the classroom. Residential center staff members conducted tutorials and study time in residential centers. The administrative staff also monitored this extension of the instructional program.

In classrooms, much of the instruction was individualized. Care was taken to adhere to established pacing and the use of best practices. Weekly benchmark testing (some in Braille), along with in-class and after-school tutoring supported the learning process. *Test Magic* and other ancillary materials were used for this purpose. Teachers participated in professional development in the areas of curriculum integration and the use of the computer in content areas. In addition to this, teachers were given content area resource notebooks that provided background information and helped them to plan more effectively. Both the assistance team and administrators reviewed lesson plans and gave teachers feedback. Often this was accomplished during planning periods. Assistance team members conducted demonstration lessons and shared effective teaching/learning strategies.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

The school's administrators and the assistance team from the Division of Early Intervention and Education provided staff members with information and training sessions on Student Accountability Standards. Additional training received at regional meetings and conferences helped teachers and other staff members fully understand the impact for students with multiple handicapping conditions. Students and their parents were made aware of the expectations for student achievement.

Closing the Achievement Gap

The school improvement team spent time aligning DEIE goals with those of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Because the student population involved in end-of-grade testing was small, and many had more than one handicapping condition, attention also was given to individualized education plans (IEP). This, however, did not negate the expectation for student success.

Student profiles were maintained and a learning center was available for after-school assistance. Staff in the learning center assisted students with homework and other activities to strengthen academic and learning skills. The center was equipped with adaptive technology for use by blind and visually impaired students. Four stations, with one being the computer lab, offered supervised access to the Internet. The other three stations provided tutorial programming under the guidance of qualified volunteers and staff. Tutors either worked with individual students or in small groups. Efforts were made to address students' learning styles.

Professional Development

Teachers and staff at the Governor Morehead School found the curriculum integration professional development activities to be most beneficial. This training helped them to not only focus on the content areas that are tested, but helped them to include those areas that were not. The DEIE assistance team personalized training to meet the specific needs of individual teachers. Time was spent helping teachers locate appropriate materials that supported the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. Not only did members of this group provide training, they served as coaches, monitored and returned to give follow-up.

School Climate

The climate at the Governor Morehead School was safe, warm and friendly. Students with exceptional mobility skills moved around the campus independently. Those who were not as self-sufficient were accompanied by staff members. Students and staff were treated with dignity and respect.

GRIMSLEY HIGH SCHOOL

801 Westover Terrace
Greensboro North Carolina 27408
910.370.8180

Guilford County Schools
Terry B. Grier, Superintendent
Jane T. Teague, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Urban
Grade span at the school	9-12
Number of certified staff members	109
Number of classified staff members	11
Number of lateral entry staff members	3
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:15
Student attendance rate	93.5%
Attendance rate of faculty	
Number of teachers new to this school last year	23
Teacher turnover rate	2%

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
9	514	African-American	430	27.8%
10	374	Asian	42	2.7%
11	356	Caucasian	1048	67.7%
12	305	Hispanic	12	.7%
		Native American	4	.3%
		Other	13	.8%

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	352	22.7%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	11	10.5%
Asian		
Caucasian	94	89.5%
Hispanic		
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	25	22	10	14	34

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Two administrators	Two parents
Two counselors	Two classified personnel
Two math teachers	English teacher
Two social studies teachers	

Leadership

The principal was starting her fifth year in her position, which enabled her to continue improving this large, urban, traditional high school toward ever-higher achievement for all students--be they workforce bound or International Baccalaureate candidates. Her extensive work experience included working at all grade-levels, in both generalist and specialist roles, which has prepared her well for competently overseeing a comprehensive high school.

Among the personal or leadership qualities that the principal identified for herself, which interviewed faculty members also perceived, were being:

- A hard and tireless worker (e.g. 80-hour work weeks are not uncommon), who rolls up her sleeves to join and set the pace for her very productive faculty
- Consistent and willing to follow through on decisions and commitments
- Willing to make the hard decisions, such as engaging in innovative fund-raising, and sponsoring a full-service student health clinic

The principal also possessed a very solid philosophy of education, which included:

- Utilizing psychological or interpersonal rewards, so as not to be dependent on often scarce material rewards
- Believing that students are ultimately responsible for their own learning
- Recognizing that comprehensive organizational change takes at least three years
- Believing that students are her primary customers, and that change occurs "one student at a time"
- Instituting instructional support school counseling services to be at the core of the instructional program
- Believing that effective student discipline is the foundation for effective classroom instruction, and that effective discipline is dependent on offering students choices and following through on designated consequences

The principal empowers her faculty and the School Leadership Team (12 faculty and parent members) that she has created. She described her teachers as bright, properly credentialed and hard working. As implied above, she has also empowered her instructional support staff, and holds weekly advisory group meetings with them. She expected her administrative staff to share in curriculum/instruction responsibilities and each was responsible for overseeing two subject area departments. School leadership team members are authorized to make or recommend governance and budgetary decisions, and teachers assist her with performance appraisal of fellow-teachers. The principal observed teachers in the classroom at least two periods per day.

Curriculum and Instruction, Student Accountability Standards, Parent Involvement and Achievement Gaps

Instructional efforts were needs-driven: The principal and her teachers used an elaborate record-keeping system of test scores to identify and target students in need of intensive instruction, and each teacher subsequently "adopts" his/her designated Level I and II students for intensive instruction. The principal believed that virtually all students are regularly engaged in learning, based partly on never seeing any who are tuned out or with their heads down. Ninth-graders were specifically targeted for extra attention and assistance. Two groups of volunteer teachers teamed to provide integrated instruction to needy 9th and 10th grade students. Test data were used to place students, and guide the starting point for instruction.

The faculty members interviewed stated that the faculty was a cohesive group, who preferred to "swim together" rather than potentially "sink" as individuals. Teachers responsible for end-of-course exams are supported by non-end-of-course teachers, and even coaches strove to uphold student academic requirements. Teachers backed up each other in their tutoring assignments, and insured that students completed all of the academic work assigned to them. A true or comprehensive mentoring program was also implemented for new teachers.

Interventions to improve student academic performance were numerous. First, all teachers were required to provide after-school tutoring to needy students, although many had been offering this service by their own choice. Second, teachers provided direct instruction targeted to students' identified needs or weaknesses, as measured by frequent academic assessment. Third, the remedial focus for this school year is to advance Level II students to Level III (as compared to last year's focus on advancing Level I students). The principal has an elaborate accounting system for tracking all non-proficient students, which her teachers adopted so that they can account for the progress of all targeted students. The faculty tended to emphasize the numbers of non-proficient students who advanced by one or more proficiency levels, rather than overall gain scores for a particular subject or subgroup of students. Finally, teachers used their own study-groups to determine how to best serve Level III and IV students, and have recently stressed *Paideia* methods for this purpose. The bottom line of all of these efforts, as reported by the principal, was that **all students have graduated with a diploma for the past three years** .

The staff became accustomed to addressing most of their development and support needs in-house or on their own, rather than relying on their central office. As stated earlier, teacher/administrator study groups were ongoing, and the School Leadership Team is very active and productive.

School Climate and Parent Involvement

At Grimsley High School, the faculty, parents and students matter to and care for each other. High standards and expectations of performance are accompanied by everyone being both empowered to achieve them, as well as accountable for achieving them. The principal believed that her instructional support services represented the core of her school, and promoted that an adult guardian be available for every student. The relatively minor discipline problems--occasional student fights--were immediately, thoroughly and fairly addressed. Parents served on the School Leadership Team, and two parents volunteered as office assistants. Another measure of satisfaction with Grimsley High School was that numerous teachers try to enroll their own children in the school.

LAKEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

245 Lakewood School Road
Salemburg, North Carolina 28358
910.525.5171

Sampson County Schools
Gary Weeks, Superintendent
Jeff Bell, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Rural
Grade span at the school	9-12
Number of certified staff members	40
Number of classified staff members	10
Number of lateral entry staff members	3
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	18
Student attendance rate	95.3%
Attendance rate of faculty	
Number of teachers new to this school last year	5.5
Teacher turnover rate	

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
9	163	African-American	204	40.8%
10	132	Asian	1	.2%
11	123	Caucasian	271	54.2%
12	102	Hispanic	12	2.4%
		Native American	7	1.4%
		Other	5	1.0%

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	247	49.4%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	6	15%
Asian		
Caucasian	34	85%
Hispanic		
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	6	13	10	2	9

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Two co-chairpersons	Science teacher
Principal	English teacher
Assistant principal	Social Studies teacher
Media specialist	Workforce development teacher
JROTC instructor	Math teacher
Parent	Business teacher
Student	

Leadership

Lakewood High School's principal and staff were quick to say their success as a top twenty-five school had to do with replication of best practices and keen cross-curriculum focus. For the second consecutive year, Lakewood High School was recognized as one of the top schools in the state for student achievement and performance as shown on end-of-course tests. The principal, a cordial administrator of two years, led by example. Teachers referred to the principal as a visible and caring administrator who had high expectations for teachers and students. The school improvement team played a major role in decisions concerning the total school structure. The principal was credited with setting the vision of high expectations and monitoring the process well. He worked hard to find funds for needed resources and was generous in praises for work well done. The administration capitalized on the synergy of the school community.

Parent Involvement

Over the past two years, the Parent Teacher Student Organization became more involved in the school. It worked diligently with *Renaissance*, a program that recognizes students in different facets of improvement including academics, attendance, behavior, and athletic competition. *Renaissance* was the school's invitation for students to excel. Parents were actively involved with teachers and spearheaded the school's outstanding status in the ABCs.

Curriculum and Instruction

Through well-planned and focused instruction, students were assured of the opportunity to be successful. Teachers' lessons plans were organized and aligned with the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. Up-to-date pacing guides allowed teachers to maintain adequate instruction and assessments to complement the 4x4 block schedule.

A variety of teaching strategies and replications of proven strategies were used to meet the needs of students. After-school tutorials, practical application of instructional materials, and a comprehensive school plan of curriculum integration with emphasis on reading and critical thinking skills helped to increase student proficiency levels.

Mainstreaming students into the regular classes, after-school tutorial sessions, guidance and assistance by coaches were identified as strategies used to help at-risk students. ISS and "chill out" with a limit on absences addressed behavioral concerns. Also, in place was a focused after-school remediation program two weeks prior to testing.

Challenging Level III and IV students served the school well in its overall performance. All courses, except algebra, had honors classes. Long and short-term projects, outside reading assignments, data analysis, and self-paced program texts were used to raise the bar for Level III and IV students.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

Teachers at Lakewood High School worked together to understand each other's curricula and expectations. Through collaboration within the school and within the school system, teachers were able to scrutinize the curriculum for possible gaps. Support from the central office was seen as a strength of the total school program. Staff development opportunities, information on relevant course work and workshops were readily available through the central office. Teachers at the school had a good understanding coupled with appreciation of the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* as evidenced in conversation about their work and students' needs in meeting promotion and accountability standards. Teaching and learning were internalized as efforts for continuous improvement. Thinking freshmen and sophomores would be the first to take the Exit Exam, they were informed about the exam in homeroom, regular classrooms, and in guidance counseling sessions.

Closing the Achievement Gap

To become aware of needs to close the achievement gap, the principal and selected teachers attended the Minority and At-Risk Conference in Greensboro.

Professional Development

The school staff was involved in varied staff development activities to prepare them for improving student achievement. *Creating Independence through Student-Owned Strategies (CRISS)*, interdisciplinary teaching skills, writing workshops, and reading improvement tips workshops were held throughout the school year. Follow-up sessions for non-attending staff were presented by school staff at professional development activities. *Dip Into Vocabulary Everyday (DIVE)* and *Reading Across the Curriculum Every Week (RACE)* programs, used across the school, were developed and implemented by teachers after professional development sessions. Sharing was a requirement after attendance in a professional development activity. Both programs were extremely helpful in improving student achievement performance.

School Climate

Administrators, teachers, and staff at Lakewood High School understand that in order for students to improve and achieve academically, they must be in a safe, orderly, and inviting environment. Students were made aware and were held accountable for school rules via handbooks, grade-level meetings, posted rules, and the modeling of respect. Teachers reviewed the handbook with students at the beginning of the school year. Extra copies were available for students who needed them.

All teachers characterized the school as a "wonderful place, with good teacher morale and well-behaved students." The administrators were visible about the campus and supportive of teachers and students. Counselors and support personnel were available to assist with student concerns and to offer counseling services. Guidance counselors involved parents in concerns of students. The school had a warm and inviting climate filled with orderly movement and pleasant chatter. The school placed special attention on a firm, fair, and consistent school structure.

NORTHWEST CABARRUS HIGH SCHOOL

5130 NW Cabarrus Drive
Concord NC 28027-7624
704.788.4111

Cabarrus County Schools
Harold E. Winkler, Jr., Superintendent
Phil Hull, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Suburban
Grade span at the school	9-12
Number of certified staff members	104
Number of classified staff members	14
Number of lateral entry staff members	3
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:14%
Student attendance rate	96%
Attendance rate of faculty	97.27%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	10
Teacher turnover rate	12%

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
9	424	African-American	146	10.0%
10	360	Asian	20	1.2%
11	286	Caucasian	1210	89.0%
12	339	Hispanic	19	1.4%
		Native American	5	.4%
		Other	9	.6%

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	125	9%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	5	4.8%
Asian		
Caucasian	97	93.3%
Hispanic	1	.96%
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	18	30	15	11	30

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Principal	Media specialist
Ten teachers	Three parents
Assistant principal	Career development coordinator

Note: Dr. Walter H. Hart was principal of Northwest Cabarrus High School during the 1999-2000 school year. The information contained in this profile is a collaboration among Dr. Hart, the current administrative team and selected faculty members.

Leadership

The administration at Northwest Cabarrus High was held in very high regard. It was generally felt that the principal fostered a safe and orderly environment where teachers felt free to experiment and do their jobs without interference and discipline problems. He developed a shared vision with respect to what the instructional goals of the school should be, effectively communicated that vision to the staff, and actively sought their input. The principal motivated teachers to creatively engage students in working toward the school vision. It was felt that students achieve more and perform better when taught by teachers who feel confident about their content area and classroom skills. With this in mind, faculty and staff were carefully chosen and proper mentoring and training opportunities provided. The principal provided an atmosphere for learning to take place. The principal made sure new teachers were coached and mentored by veteran teachers. He was highly visible in the halls and classrooms where teachers and students found him very encouraging and positive. He made every effort to provide what staff needed to be successful . It was also felt that an instructional leader was not necessarily restricted to administrators. Department chairs, teachers and other instructional staff also provided instructional leadership.

The mentoring program for teachers focused primarily on new teachers, although staff development for experienced teachers was also a consideration. Cabarrus County Schools recognized the need for a formal mentoring program for teachers at Initially Licensed Teacher (ILT) levels 1, 2, and 3. The program includes mentors, training for Performance-Based Licensure (PBL), in-house support groups, workshops throughout the year, and a network of trained personnel designed to help new teachers through those first years. At Northwest Cabarrus High School (NCHS), there is also a new teacher orientation program designed for any teacher new to NCHS, not just ILTs. With this in mind, the school developed its own "Welcome to NCHS" handbook and spent significant time addressing any questions/concerns posed by new teachers. In addition, every new teacher (including experienced teachers) was assigned a buddy to help make them feel more at home and welcomed at NCHS.

Leadership was a collaborative endeavor at NCHS. Faculty input was solicited in regards to instructional goal setting, the school improvement plan and budget expenditures. Parental and student input was solicited in relevant areas. The school improvement team provided input into decisions related to the instructional supply budget, staff development budget, priorities of school improvement plan, input regarding school instructional/safety goals and the school schedule. Assistance in improving student achievement was a collaborative effort involving faculty, parents, students and the administrative team.

Parent Involvement

There was strong parental involvement at the school. Parents participated in the Athletic Booster Club, the Band Booster Club and the PTSA. There was an extensive number of volunteers in various school activities. Parents were members of the school improvement team and participated in ad hoc parent summit meetings. The school kept parents informed on an ongoing basis by publishing a school newsletter and sending progress reports.

Curriculum and Instruction

Curriculum articulation was accomplished through the development of both county-wide and school-based curriculum guides. The school took pride in the development of in-house pacing guides. Through Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) meetings, new programs were explained and new state requirements were shared. The school held a Curriculum Fair where parents and students were given the opportunity to learn about specific classes and programs. Accountability standards meetings were open to the public. Information was mailed home regarding the Student Accountability Standards Policy. PTSA Open House was held each semester to meet each teacher and discuss the course syllabus. Freshmen Orientation was held to review rules and expectations of the school.

In preparing for the end-of-course tests (EOC's), department as well as faculty meetings were held to discuss effective strategies. Pacing guides were utilized along with departmental practice tests. There were school-wide practice questions and writing prompts across the curriculum. There was a tenth grade comprehensive test review. The Beta Club held tutoring sessions after school plus there was teacher-sponsored tutoring. The school has an Alternative Program for Excellence (APEX) Center which is a remediation program for students demonstrating difficulty passing the EOC's. This program works closely with Rowan-Cabarrus Community College to offer preparation for adult diplomas and GED diplomas.

The following programs were in place to impact student achievement:

The *Renaissance Program* partners with community businesses whose purpose is to produce responsible, motivated students who are proud of their accomplishments. Academic standards are set and recognition is given for continuous improvement in academic achievement and behavior. Students who improve and excel receive recognition and privileges such as exam exemption, T-shirts and other apparels, lunch privileges, or discounts from local businesses.

The Student Service Management Team (SSMT) meets weekly to discuss individual interventions for at-risk students. Teachers recommend students for SSMT consideration; students with high at-risk factors are automatically recommended, such as high absence rate, sibling dropouts, etc. SSMT works with teachers and keeps track of students to intervene to help students succeed. SSMT is comprised of teachers, guidance counselors, assistant principal, APEX coordinator, and the dropout prevention coordinator. Strong parental involvement is ensured by this intervention through conferences and home visits.

The *Adult Mentor Program* pairs at-risk students with compatible community volunteers to become another positive influence and resource to encourage academic progress.

Curriculum Assistance Class sponsored by the Exceptional Children's Department is designed to give mainstreamed students an extra class period with a teacher to gain needed help with EOC courses.

The following remediation strategies were employed to assist at-risk students:

- *SSMT intervention strategies*, including conferences, celebrations, awareness of progress;
- a dropout prevention counselor who closely involves parents, teachers and students at risk;
- Alternative Program for Excellence (APEX) to provide a supportive environment for students who need alternative methods of learning to become successful and to realize their potential;
- Test Re-take Policy which states that every student who fails a test has the option to re-take that test to earn a grade up to a grade of 70 and allows students to pass a course and relearn information which may appear on an EOC test.
- *Cabarrus County Schools Appeals Process* allows any student who failed either the teacher's coursework or the EOC exam to be considered for an appeal. The student had to pass either the course or the test and could not have failed both. During the appeal process, input is solicited from the teacher, student, and parent regarding the student's performance in the EOC class. Based on that information, an appeals committee made up of two administrators and one EOC teacher decides whether or not the student will receive the option to remediate through the APEX program. If a student is allowed to remediate and completes the APEX program with 80% mastery of content, the student receives credit for the class. If the student is denied or the student does not complete the APEX program at 80%, the student must re-take the course. At this time, approximately 85% of all students are generally allowed the remediation option; about 5% more are given direct credit during the process, and the other 5% are required to re-take the course.

For behaviorially at-risk students, there were curriculum assistance courses for students in the Exceptional Children's (EC) Program. The school employed a Behavior Management Technician (BMT), a non-certified position, who helped to monitor the progress of BED students one-on-one. Individual behavior plans were developed by the EC department with assistance from the BMT, student and parents to determine individual contracts for acceptable behavior. Counseling was provided through school and community resources; inter-agency cooperation (DSS, Sheriff's Department, School Psychologist); peer mediation by trained student mediators; alternative education offerings through APEX; and the dropout prevention counselor who worked closely with parents, teachers, and students.

Strategies to challenge students performing at Levels III and IV included

- offering of Honors and Advanced Placement Courses;
- implementing The *Huskins Program* in which students leave NCHS during the school day and take courses offered through Rowan-Cabarrus Community College for college credit;
- the *Renaissance Program* to reward students showing academic progress through community and school-based rewards;
- summer enrichment programs such as Governor's School, music programs, Summer Ventures, etc.; and
- the *ESCROW Program* which is the University of North Carolina at Charlotte's (UNCC's) version of the Huskins Program.

In the non-tested areas, monthly departmental meetings focused on EOC deficiencies, streamlining pacing guides, and generating new activities and strategies to reinforce the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* (SCS) objectives. Monitoring instruction, implementing SCS in all areas, encouraging cross-content interdisciplinary teaching, and providing staff development opportunities that focus on instructional strategies and hands-on discovery learning ensured that all areas were focused on improving student achievement.

There was a deliberate effort to involve staff in elective areas as well as non-certified staff. This was accomplished through an ongoing, conscious development of a "teamwork" philosophy among staff, combined with a mutual respect and a family atmosphere at the school. There was also an adult mentoring program manned by community volunteers.

Cooperation among colleagues ensured that all staff thoroughly understood the SCS. Collaboration and teamwork were accomplished through departmental staff development, interventions by the assistant principal for intervention, the "buddy" system, teacher-led staff development, school-based committees, and sponsorships of student organizations. Other strategies included departmental meetings, mentoring and the evaluation process with pre/post conferences and administrative guidance.

School efforts were supported by the central office through instructional Team Meetings for APIs, the high school division director, the VOCATS director, technology coordinator, technology specialist, and general backup and support regarding school decisions on student discipline, attendance policy requirements and grades.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

To assist parents and students in preparing for the Student Accountability Standards, Northwest Cabarrus High School

- held a Curriculum Fair where parents meet all teachers and learned about all course offerings;
- mailed brochures explaining policies mailed to each parent;
- conducted a freshmen Orientation session
- implemented parent/student support signed pledges;
- mailed letters home to students/parents who qualify for appeals process;
- attended API orientation county meetings regarding details of appeals, process, dates, etc;
- conducted an orientation at middle school for rising ninth graders regarding graduation requirements and changing accountability standards;
- shared information with faculty regarding appeals/PEP procedures in opening meeting and through memos from API as dates approached; and
- included inclusion past principal and API on county committee to develop local policy.

Closing the Achievement Gap

A number of strategies are used to close the achievement gaps

- multicultural student union activities,
- *Renaissance Program*,
- SSMT interventions,
- remediation, tutoring programs, and

- Freshmen Seminar classes.

Professional Development

Professional development activities were provided that focused on the following areas:

- improving instructional strategies on the 4x4 block schedule, specifically implementing quality tools and thinking maps;
- improving in the use and competency with technology in the classroom;
- implementing instructional strategies that encouraged active and engaging learning for students, moving away from lecture and the "traditional" format whenever possible; and
- allowing individual teachers to attend other workshops with the requirement of presenting information gained to their department or whole faculty, whichever was more appropriate.

Staff development for working with students performing at Levels I and II focused on what could be done to move Level II students to Level III. Each department examined specific goal/objective breakdowns in test data to find weaknesses and target those areas likely to move students from Level II to Level III. Curriculum Assistance classes were provided to students in the Exceptional Children's Program as needed. Students were scheduled into inclusion classes to receive more one-on-one help. Freshman Seminar classes designed to help ninth graders make an easier transition into high school were held. Although some schools restricted the classes to just ninth graders, NCHS offered the class to any student who may be experiencing difficulties in academics. The class provided an extra resource for the students as they talked about changes from middle to high school, study skills, time management, and work with upperclass peer helpers to make a successful transition to high school.

Follow-up and technical assistance after professional development included these:

- sharing by individuals who attended professional development off-site, if appropriate – "train the trainer" model;
- accessing services of the technology specialist;

- consulting the API as needed;
- serving as resources for each other;
- sharing with the administrative team when conducting positive follow-up activities in their classrooms, and
- praising and recognizing teachers when they used successful ideas in their own classrooms.

School Climate

To ensure that all children knew rules and consequences, the following things were done.

- An orientation for rising ninth graders was held to make them aware of the many activities that they could be involved with that would ultimately deter them from making negative behavioral decisions
- A copy of the student handbook was printed and distributed to each student each year.
- Administrators visited classrooms to discuss rules and consequences with students at the beginning of each school year.
- Rules and consequences were also shown over closed-circuit television system periodically.
- Teachers were asked to cover rules extensively with ninth graders, including pre/post testing.
- Teachers were encouraged to remind upperclassmen of primary rules and consequences each year and post rules.
- Administrators developed a specific set of consequences for each offense of school rules, and discipline occurred fairly and consistently.

Strategies/programs that provided a safe, orderly, and caring school were as follows:

- school resource officer stationed at school;
- active S.A.V.E. organization on campus;
- zero tolerance for fighting, drugs and weapons of any kind;
- student awareness of consistent policy regarding weapons, fighting and drug infractions;
- *Renaissance Program;*
- consistent monitoring of safety procedures by school staff;
- metal detectors used at major sporting events;

- walkie-talkies used daily;
- Freshmen Seminar classes discussed alternatives to fighting, drugs, and weapons;
- SSMT interventions with parent/teacher conferences, social worker input, and one-to-one discussion of student progress and/or possible frustrations;
- rewards offered by school for information leading to weapons or drugs;
- high expectations of school faculty to provide engaging classroom instruction for students;
- peer mediation/conflict resolution training available;
- "Nonviolent Crisis Intervention" training available to train teachers to de-escalate problems before they lead to physical involvement;
- administration and faculty visibility in halls and cafeteria
- wide variety of after-school activities to appeal to and involve all students in a positive manner; and
- use of Behavior Management Technician to prevent and de-escalate potential and minor situations.

The instructional support personnel, including the administrative team and counselors did everything possible to support an environment that reflected active, engaged classroom learning and high expectations. This philosophy was seen as the best preventers of school violence and the best advocators of a positive school climate.

The instructional support staff helped teachers, when necessary, developed meaningful lesson plans; counseled students having academic, personal, or disciplinary difficulties in a specific class, provided staff development designed to promote this ideal; and tried to support the teachers to make their jobs easier. If teachers felt successful and supported, students would feel successful and supported, also.

The *Annual Report on School Violence* was used to

- gauge NCHS's standing with other typical high schools,
- compare purposes and future data trends, and
- plan strategies to lower the percentage of violence across the campus.

ROSEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

900 Rosewood Road
Goldsboro, NC 27520-7816
919.705.6050

Wayne County Schools
Steve Taylor, Superintendent
Richard Sauls, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Rural
Grade span at the school	9-12
Number of certified staff members	34
Number of classified staff members	15
Number of lateral entry staff members	2
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:12
Student attendance rate	95.44%
Attendance rate of faculty	97%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	3
Teacher turnover rate	9%

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
9	129	African-American	50	12%
10	114	Asian	2	.4%
11	94	Caucasian	355	86%
12	77	Hispanic	4	.9%
		Native American	3	.7%
		Other		

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	54	1.3%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	3	8.6%
Asian		
Caucasian	31	88.6%
Hispanic	1	2.8%
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	7	8	6	5	8

School Improvement Team Members

English teacher	Math teacher
Music teacher	Foreign language teacher
Art teacher	Science teacher
English teacher	Social studies teacher
Science teacher	Workforce development teacher
EC teacher	Media specialist
ROTC instructor	Physical education teacher

Leadership

The administration and department chairs provided the instructional leadership for the school. Administrators had high expectations for staff and students. Mentors were provided to teachers new to the profession and new to the school. Department members embraced new teachers to facilitate acclimation to the school.

The administration expected teachers to focus on course objectives as outlined in the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. The principal closely monitored instruction and student activity. Students were expected to prepare to become productive citizens.

The school improvement team focused on improving communication, curriculum articulation, professional development, and attendance and discipline policies, all of which impacted student improvement.

The greatest assistance that was provided to the staff to help improve student achievement was protected instructional time.

Parent Involvement

Parents were greatly involved in this community school. They supported the athletic program, academics, teachers and the administration. Parents felt comfortable coming to the school and conferenced with teachers or administrators as necessary.

Curriculum and Instruction

Courses were taught according to the goals and objectives in the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study,* and pacing guides were used to direct instruction. Teachers met by departments to address curriculum articulation. To insure that students were prepared for end-of-course tests, teachers made certain that all students understood the concept being covered before moving on to a new concept. Assignments and assessments were designed to improve thinking skills using essay, matching, and multiple choice formats. End-of-course test scores counted as a percentage of the students' final exam grades.

An after-school tutoring program was held Friday afternoons for two hours to provide assistance for potential Level I and II students. Parents were notified of the tutoring services offered to their child by the school. Level III and IV students were challenged to perform at even higher levels. They were provided an opportunity to research a subject of interest and report back to the class.

Courses without end-of-course tests were also included in the accountability process for improving student achievement. Teachers of those courses were required to integrate writing and math into their course content.

The central office provided curriculum support materials and staff development.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

Wayne County Public Schools' central office prepared *Making the Grade in Wayne County Schools - A Guide to Student Accountability Standards* outlining for parents the Student Accountability Standards and promotion and graduation requirements. In addition, the student, parents, and teachers signed a district Student Accountability Agreement outlining expectations for achievement and the responsibilities of the stakeholders.

Each teacher sent parents a copy of the course syllabus and an outline of objectives to be covered during each nine weeks. Parents were informed of courses that had end-of-course tests. Parents and students were made aware of the standards and the required exit exam.

Closing the Achievement Gap

An analysis of test data was conducted to identify gaps in achievement levels of students. Teachers used *Plato* and *ZAP-Me* software to enhance classroom learning. Additionally, the students were encouraged to participate in an after-school tutoring session supported by faculty members and student coaches.

Professional Development

Because writing was identified as an area of concern, professional development sessions on *Writing Across the Curriculum* were conducted for the staff. Staff members were also involved in *CRISS (Creating Independence through Student-owned Strategies),* technology-based, and professionalism sessions.

School Climate

The administration and staff at Rosewood combined efforts to ensure the school provided a safe environment for students. The student handbook was reviewed with all students and sent home to parents. At the beginning of the school year, the principal met with students at each grade level to discuss behavior and academic expectations.

SHELBY HIGH SCHOOL

230 East Dixon Blvd.
Shelby, NC 28152
704.482.3409

Shelby City Schools
Cliff Wilson, Superintendent
Bill Anderson, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Rural
Grade span at the school	9-12
Number of certified staff members	67
Number of classified staff members	26
Number of lateral entry staff members	
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:12
Student attendance rate	94.4%
Attendance rate of faculty	97%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	2
Teacher turnover rate	3%

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
9	260	African-American	347	45%
10	177	Asian	9	1.25%
11	174	Caucasian	400	53%
12	148	Hispanic	2	.50%
		Native American		
		Other	1	.25%

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	210	27.67%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	5	8%
Asian		
Caucasian	57	89%
Hispanic	2	3%
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	3	17	13	7	27

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

English teacher	Business teacher
Two math teachers	Fine arts teacher
Social studies teacher	Foreign language teacher
Two science teachers	Exceptional children teacher
Three administrators	Two workforce development teachers
Two guidance counselors	Vocational director

Leadership

The principal facilitated instruction by directing teachers to focus on the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*, analyzing test data and conferencing with teachers about student needs. The principal employed a philosophy of shared leadership that began with the school improvement team. That team was made up of at least one elected staff member from each department. The school improvement team met bimonthly throughout the school year to discuss instructional strategies, organizational issues, and any other business that impacted the efficiency and effectiveness of the school. The principal set the agenda with input from the staff. All efforts and decisions were guided by the strategic plan of the school.

Parent Involvement

Shelby High School implemented a parent advisory group to advise the administration and staff in policies and procedures. The parent group met six times throughout the year. All parents and guardians were urged to attend these meetings which were widely publicized in the school's monthly newsletter, web page, and school marquis. An open-door policy was in effect and parents were encouraged to visit and become involved in all aspects of the school.

Curriculum and Instruction

The *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* and the *Workforce Development Education Blueprint* guided the instructional process at Shelby High School. These guides allowed Shelby High School to offer comprehensive educational programs and support excellent student achievement. Workforce Development was targeted to support the entire instructional program implementing the ten *Key Practices for High School that Work*. Shelby High School provided numerous academic course offerings for students who sought the most challenging course of study. The school offered thirteen advanced placement classes that carried additional 2.0 points per semester and ten honors courses that carried an additional 1.0 point per semester.

Staff members provided continual, ongoing assessment for use in instructional decision-making, and programs were evaluated for their effectiveness. Reading and writing were taught throughout the curriculum.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

The Student Accountability Standards were communicated to staff, parents and students throughout the school year using several strategies. These strategies included parent advisory group, faculty meetings, newsletters, and the school web page.

Closing the Achievement Gap

Shelby High School provided extended learning time during seventh and eighth periods to address the academic needs of students scoring below their potential. Staff members identified academic needs specific to minority students. A seventh period was offered for remediation, which could be mandatory or voluntary. A remediation schedule was in place that allowed students to attend sessions Monday through Thursday. This period is referred as the "golden hour." No sports teams practiced, and no extracurricular activities took precedence over remediation. The eighth period class offering was an opportunity for students who failed English in the previous school year to enroll in an English class and catch up with their classmates. For instance, if a ninth grade student failed English, she/he could enroll in English Ten during the regular school day and take English Nine during eighth period. This program allowed Shelby High School to reduce the dropout rate and provided additional opportunities for students to earn credits towards graduation.

Professional Development

Staff members used released versions of tests and multiple assessments aligned with the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. Staff members examined the structure of the North Carolina end-of-course tests and use test data to improve instruction. Teachers helped students understand the testing process. Various staff development activities supported technology integration in the classroom. Staff members also studied, observed and implemented best practices at identified successful schools.

School Climate

The staff of Shelby High School believed that their goal of increased student achievement could not be reached without a clean, safe, and orderly environment. Staff members set high expectations for student behavior. The Shelby High School Code of Conduct was clearly communicated to all students throughout the year and was prominently displayed in all classrooms. Shelby High School was recognized in 1998-1999 as the number one high school in North Carolina with the fewest incidents of violence according to the Annual Crime and Violence Report submitted to NCDPI. Students were recognized for excellence in student academic performance. Staff members developed and provided programs based on students' talents and interests to enhance and support academic achievement.

SOUTHERN GUILFORD HIGH SCHOOL

5700 Drake Road
Greensboro, NC 27406
336.674.4250

Guilford County Schools
Terry Grier, Superintendent
Angelo Kidd, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Rural
Grade span at the school	9-12
Number of certified staff members	62
Number of classified staff members	14
Number of lateral entry staff members	3
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:24
Student attendance rate	92.7%
Attendance rate of faculty	97%
Number of teachers new to this school last year	6
Teacher turnover rate	2%

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
09	251	African-American	178	25%
10	174	Asian	27	3%
11	166	Caucasian	473	67%
12	116	Hispanic	17	2%
		Native American	10	2%
		Other	2	1%

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	193	27%

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	14	22%
Asian	1	2%
Caucasian	46	74%
Hispanic	1	2%
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	14	15	16	2	15

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

One chairperson	Eleven teachers
One secretary	One teacher assistant
Two parents	Five students
Three administrators	

Leadership

According to principal, the major responsibility of an instructional leader involved being "able to model, to walk the talk." He insisted that the best teacher in the building should be the principal. He further argued, "If I am not the best teacher, I should not be the principal." Accordingly, instructional leaders positively motivated staff and created an atmosphere that was conducive to good learning and teaching. Therefore, instructional leadership involved helping staff to improve and facilitate "win-win" situations.

On the other hand, teachers insisted that the major responsibility of an instructional leader entailed the coordination of learning and teaching throughout the school. To accomplish this aim, the instructional leader was charged to find financial resources for needful programs. Since funds were generally limited and most programs required additional funds for implementation, the instructional leader explored ways to secure essential resources to maximize the school experience.

The mentoring experience for the principal was different from those of teachers. During his tenure as an assistant principal, the current school administrator's principal served as an informal mentor. His principal helped him by furnishing enough ownership, which allowed him to feel fully responsible. In so doing, his mentor/principal also gave him numerous opportunities to learn. In this fashion, "he did not spoon feed me." Despite the fact that the administrator had an informal mentor, he felt that more formal mentoring would have been beneficial. Thus, structured sessions with a mentor would have allowed for prompt feedback and guidance.

The school improvement team influenced every aspect of the school. Virtually all decisions were filtered through the team. For the most part, the principal strongly encouraged site-based management and overall input from staff. The school improvement team made a considerable amount of decisions pertaining to capital outlay. Basically, they helped with the budget. They also produced safe schools plans and arranged for some staff development activities. Additionally, they provided input regarding certain management issues, such as approving events, projects, and celebrations for students.

New teachers gained assistance from building-level staff as well as the school district. Guilford High School offered an orientation session to all new staff members. They were also assigned buddies or mentors within the school. This approach not only facilitated meaningful relationships, but it also helped new teachers to more quickly adjust to the new environment and to become a part of the school family. In addition, a mentor system was set up through Guilford County Schools. This program, which is called Right Start, included seminars and professional development. On top of these, the principal personally served as mentor and provided support to all first and second-year teachers.

In an effort to help teachers to improve student achievement, the principal disaggregated test data by ethnic and gender groups. This information was shared with staff. Afterwards, the principal facilitated discussions and promoted strategies to achieve better academic outcomes for students. He also shared data regarding student performance on end-of-course tests. During shared planning time the principal facilitated discussions about the effective use of reflection logs. Aside from sharing data and facilitating discussions, the school administrator promoted early intervention and related staff development. Besides these, he supported active engagement and set high expectations for all students.

Assistance was provided in improving student achievement. The principal used several approaches to improve student achievement and monitor instruction. He met regularly with the leadership team, department heads, and individual teachers. During these meetings, he shared information about the status of students and their performance. He then facilitated discussions and related strategies to improve achievement. The principal was also very visible in classrooms. His almost daily visits allowed him to monitor teaching strategies and to determine whether teachers reached students.

On the other hand, teachers received assistance not only from the administrator, but also from other sources. Frequently, they received assistance from the departments within the school, as well as informal subgroups. Thus, Southern Guilford High school functioned in some ways like a family.

Parent Involvement

Parents were actively involved in the school. Since the school used the *Comer Model,* which focuses on strong involvement, parents assisted with a wide variety of activities. The school advisory and the vocational advisory councils were comprised of representatives of the community. Basically, these representatives were parents. They also participated on site-based leadership teams, where they provided insights and input on school-related matters. In addition, a strong and active PTSA helped the school throughout the year. Aside from these, parents participated in SWAP Day, where they exchanged place to see what school is like for their kids. At the end of SWAP Day, they participated in a debriefing to determine ways to improve the school. They were involved in the school improvement team, Athletic Boosters Club, Swap Day, and PTSA.

Curriculum and Instruction

Teachers planned the curriculum based on the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study.* They provided a variety of elective courses that motivated students to stay in school. They also integrated reading, writing and mathematics in all subjects. In addition, teachers met with feeder schools and within departments to maximize instruction.

The principal and staff worked in concert to prepare students for the end-of-course test. The principal of Southern Guilford High School prepared students in the regular program for these tests mostly through student interactions. Basically, he motivated and encouraged them. He set high academic standards. To compliment this aim, teachers prepared students by testing in the same format all year long. Students were given criterion-referenced tests at the end of nine weeks to measure their growth. Teachers also addressed end-of-course skills in Learning Academies. Aside from these, teachers reviewed test results and reminded students of objectives. They also gave practice end-of-course tests during the year.

A few basic instructional strategies impacted student performance. The school used "Learning Focused" strategies in classes. Teachers emphasized active student learning. The principal cited two instructional strategies as having the most impact on student performance. He attributed academic success to individualized and differentiated instruction.

Several instructional remediation practices were available to at-risk students. In general, teachers referred lower-performing students to academies and labs. This approach allowed them to receive one-on-one assistance. The school provided professional development that catered to the needs of these students. Paideia training was used as a basic strategy. Teachers also contacted homes and encouraged attendance, especially for students in the program for limited English proficient students. In addition, the school provided a strong tutoring program.

Though the school experienced very few behavior problems because the students were actively engaged in learning, services were available to behaviorally at-risk students at Southern Guilford High School. These students received basic counseling and referral services when they needed them. Aside from this, behaviorally at-risk students were made to feel responsible and to know that they could depend upon staff for assistance. The school perpetuated the notion that negative behaviors affected everyone. Nonetheless, these services were designed to help them deal with distracters and stresssors that interfered with learning. Services included anger management and various support groups. In some instances, students were assigned to Strong Choices/ISS to keep them in school.

Generally, at-risk students were identified, and teachers used guided studies labs for remediation. Students who did not passed math and reading experienced placement changes. They were assigned to introductory courses. These classes met every day instead of every other day, and they lasted 90 minutes all year long.

In an effort to ensure that students performing at Levels III and IV were continually challenged academically, several strategies were used. Teachers gave additional assignments. They also encouraged students to take on projects that were challenging and offered the possibility of discovery. To accomplish this aim, the principal encouraged staff to avoid grade inflation, provide variable homework each day, and ask the (EQ) Essential Question. During a special assembly, which was held in January, students who maintained a 3.0 average were provided awards and incentives. Aside from these, the principal encouraged critical thinking and curriculum integration criterion.

With the purpose of ensuring that non-tested subjects were not neglected in the instructional program, a few basic strategies were used at Southern Guilford High School. First and foremost, non-tested subjects followed all the regulations as tested classes. Both provided criterion reference tests following the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. Elective and non-certified staff were engaged in improving student achievement through curriculum integration, shared planning sessions, and reflection logs. All staff was accountable for enhancing student performance.

Non-certified staff worked with students through supportive roles with teachers. In some instances, they served as tutors and informal counselors. They also exhibited genuine care for students, which often motivated them to achieve. On the other hand, elective staff integrated the curriculum.

In an effort to ensure that non-tested subjects were not neglected in your instructional program, the principal encouraged high scores in non-tested as well as tested subjects. Teachers of non-tested subjects shared assignments and integrated curriculum. In fact, Southern Guilford High School was featured in a local newspaper for linking non-tested subjects such as chemistry and art.

Though teachers and the principal insisted that there were not enough opportunities to work as a team, they met once a month to collaborate and reflect. Planning time allowed staff to prioritize what was best for students. Staff also used shared planning periods to reflect and share best practices. Teachers participated on the school improvement team. Additionally, teachers participated in end-of-course team meetings. The guiding philosophy, however, was that Southern Guilford High School was only as strong as its weakest member, and working as a team was a major thrust.

Southern Guilford High School received considerable support and services from the central office. These services included access to the National Paideia Center, staff development, technical assistance and support. Central office also made available prioritized curriculum, intervention funds and other supportive services. Additionally, central office provided judges for the Senior Project Program.

The principal regularly monitored instruction. He observed classrooms every week. He also conducted mini-observations each week in addition to formal observations. Reflection logs were used to monitor how teachers taught and students learned.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

Efforts were made to help parents understand the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* and the Student Accountability Standards. Southern Guilford High School used several strategies. Information was provided through PTA meetings and letters which were sent to parents. Parents participated in several meetings regarding the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* and the Student Accountability Standards. Last year, parents also picked up report cards which contained related information. At this time, teachers discussed the gateways as well as ways parents can help. Other discussions included information about exit exams and the use of phone masters for parents.

In an attempt to help students understand the Student Accountability Standards and to help freshmen and sophomores prepare for the exit exam, the school used a few basic approaches. Staff introduced the "Gateways" at several PTA meetings. They also had two special meetings for parents of ninth grade students.

Closing the Achievement Gap

The extent of the achievement gap has been determined in Southern Guilford High School. As a result, staff provided programs such as AVID, lunch labs, and learning academies to close the gap. Staff insisted that significant gains were made to narrow the gap. In fact, some staff contended that the primary reason for the school's success involved closing the performance gap between majority and minority students. Accordingly, African-American students' scores rose from 27.5% to 48%. The principal also attributed this and other performance-related improvements to the establishment of excellent teacher/pupil relationships which were fundamental to learning. Another vital reason involved keeping students on task and actively engaging them from bell to bell. To accomplish this aim, teachers made the work meaningful by providing practice over time, reviewing relevant tasks, relating the curriculum to real life, cutting down on the didactic, utilizing direct instruction and using (EQ) Essential Questions for each unit to determine what students had learned.

Professional Development

Several professional development activities were provided to better prepare the principal for improving student achievement as required in the ABCs. These included

- Madeline Hunter;
- "How-To" Session;
- Max Thompson, Learning Focus Strategies - Classroom Instruction and Assessment;
- Principals' Executive Program;
- Terry Robert's Paideia Project; and
- Ann Bruffy, reading strategies.

Additional professional development is planned to assist teachers in working with students performing at Levels I and II. These included

- Diversity training,
- Total Physical Response (TPR),
- Differentiating instruction;
- Graphic organizers,
- Developmental pathways,
- Learning-focused training, and
- Brain-based learning.

Professional development was planned to assist teachers in working with Level III and IV students and help them to continue their growth and progress. To accomplish this aim, several teachers attained AIG licensure, while others are seeking it. Other activities included

- Learning-focus training;
- Brain-based learning; and

- Total Physical Response (TPR).

Follow-up and technical assistance were provided after a professional development activity. This was done through peer observations, reflection logs, and the Literacy Facilitator. Other strategies included

- Re-teaching and re-testing,
- Constant follow-up, and
- Review of previous staff development by staff or in weekly handouts from the principal.

School Climate

According to the principal, the overall climate at Southern Guilford High School was characterized as being safe, clean, and positive. Students, staff, and administrators worked in concert to assure that the school was safer and inviting. The counselor stayed with assigned students throughout the entire high school career. These professionals sent newsletters regularly to seniors about colleges and scholarships. Staff offered many programs to motivate students, help them want to come to school, and to maintain a harmonious school environment.

In order to inform all students concerning school rules and consequences, several procedures were established. Students were apprised of the rules on the first day of school. Homeroom teachers distributed and discussed the rules and consequences. Teachers also posted individual classroom rules. In addition, each student received the *Guilford County Schools Handbook/Code of Conduct* and the *Southern High Handbook*. On top of these, rules were discussed in the school newspaper.

Various strategies and programs were provided to ensure a safe, orderly, and caring school environment. Fundamentally, school rules were re-enforced by all staff. Though teachers discussed the rules, the School Resource Officer went over laws and consequences. As a safety measure, drills were periodically conducted. Visitors were requested to wear badges and reported to the office. Other safety-related programs included a SAAD/SAVE Chapter and Peer Helper teams.

Counselors, social workers, psychologists, and other support people played vital roles in the safe schools efforts. They often participated on the Safe Schools Team. They not only counseled students, but these professionals made appropriate referrals for services. Basically, they helped students to improve their academic and personal social success.

Southern Guilford High School cited no very serious behavior problems, crime or violence as indicated in the *Annual Report on School Violence.* Basically, they were minor disturbances. The school, however, experienced occasional fights, vandalism, and threats.

WEST MECKLENBURG HIGH SCHOOL

7400 Tuckaseegee Rd
Charlotte, NC 28214
704.343.6080

Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Schools
Eric Smith, Superintendent
Gary W. Evans, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Urban
Grade span at the school	9-12
Number of certified staff members	119
Number of classified staff members	50
Number of lateral entry staff members	13
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:14.7
Student attendance rate	93.6 %
Attendance rate of faculty	95.8 %
Number of teachers new to this school last year	35
Teacher turnover rate	32 %

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
9	694	African-American	889	56 %
10	377	Asian	104	7 %
11	282	Caucasian	520	33 %
12	212	Hispanic	30	2 %
		Native American	11	1 %
		Other	11	1 %

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	694	43 %

Faculty Information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	45	42 %
Asian	2	1.5 %
Caucasian	60	55 %
Hispanic	2	1.5 %
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	34	22	9	22	22

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Foreign language magnet lead teacher	Fine Arts teacher
History teacher	Health teacher
Student services representative	Math teacher
Instructional accountability facilitator	English teacher
Science teacher	Business teacher
Exceptional children's teacher	Seven parents

Leadership

Overwhelmingly, teachers felt that the instructional leadership within the *Comer Model* framework had been the major impetus for student achievement at this school. For 1999-2000, this school grew in achievement by 8.4 points over the previous year; in 1998-1999 the school grew by 9.5 points over the previous year. The person responsible for instructional leadership was the principal, but equally strong support is provided by the School Planning and Management Team (SPMT), the instructional academic coordinators or heads of departments (IAC), Comer subcommittees, assistant principals, and teacher mentors.

Teachers' views on the major responsibilities of an instructional leader included keeping abreast of current knowledge; knowing best practices in instruction; understanding the curriculum vertically and horizontally; knowing how to teach; being able to observe teachers well; knowing about the state tests; providing resources; being supportive; focusing on school climate; being a problem solver; helping teachers with weaknesses; having empathy with teachers; being a go-between in teacher-central office matters; being quick with feedback; and removing barriers to instruction.

In accordance with these teacher expectations, teachers reported that the principal boosted morale; projected positively; made problem solving easy; was willing to listen; provided gift incentives to teachers with classes of 50 percent or more students at grade level; provide gifts to students and held drawings for students on the A/B honor rolls; checked frequently with the departments; ensure that new teachers were oriented well to the school; was always available to teachers; enforced discipline; and constantly brought in speakers to motivate the staff.

The principal had 14 years of administrative experience prior to coming to West Mecklenburg High. He believed assistant principals should know all aspects of administration; therefore, duties were rotated to ensure all assistants get broad-based experience.

The staff agreed that the school was successful because there is a shared belief that the school climate must be conducive to teaching and learning and that no student can deny another student an education. Thus, there was a zero-tolerance policy in discipline; the school was described as a strict school; teachers felt safe and protected, and felt that students were free to learn. A teacher recruited from out-of-state said the school's emphasis on discipline made her choose to work at this school.

Building on the foundation of a safe school, this school credited a part of its success to its focus on collaborative relationships. This school adopted the Comer "no-fault" approach as the basis of its staff relations. Thus, a team approach predominated. There was a research committee (a Comer sub-committee) that analyzed data on a quarterly basis to make recommendations on teaching strategies. There were cross-departmental communications and sharing. A popular refrain from the teachers was that "everyone supportive," that the administrators were always available and that they felt respected by the administration and other staff.

The third pillar of school success cited was commitment to excellence and a strong curriculum focus. Referring to the ABCs, one remark made was that "the state threat worked." Thus, there were curricula aligned with the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study;* pacing guides; quarterly tests; after-school tutorials provided on a wide scale; and administrators and mentors who helped teachers with instruction. One long-serving teacher said the success being realized now was a result of an 8-10 year process and that the previous principal was also a curriculum-oriented administrator.

Examples of what teachers did differently in 1999-2000 included high expectations; concentrating on mastery; focus on assessments; increased sharing among Algebra students; tutoring on Saturdays in tenth grade writing; and a schoolwide initiative of reading across the curriculum. Once a week students read articles in the various content areas and answer assigned questions a no "F" policy in Economic, Legal and Political Systems (ELP) doing over papers and homework until proficiency increases giving essays in ELP; a schoolwide policy cracking down on tardies through "lockout" that sent tardy students to a special room; involving parents by calling home frequently; and parent contracts for ELP and other subjects.

Asked what they would change about their school if they could, staff responses included reducing class size from 28 to 20; reducing testing (too much testing through system-made tests as well as school-made tests); reducing class interruptions via announcements; increasing parent involvement; reverting to the 4x4 block schedule instead of the AB block mandated by the central office; eliminating non-teaching responsibilities; reducing the high staff turnover (32%); and getting a reading specialist for the school.

The school improvement team was given many opportunities for influencing decision making. As part of their *Comer* system, all inputs were valued, teacher empowerment was a goal and the team guides the school planning process. Thus, department teams helped to select teachers; the school improvement team discussed the business manager's fiscal proposals and determined the schedules for lunch, testing, field trips, and the policy on lockouts for tardies, among other things.

This school was designated by the LEA as an *"Equity Plus"* school. Thus, they received an additional three locally-funded teachers and $8,000 a year for three years. Teachers reported some support from the central office in the form of instructional materials. Other assistance to improve student achievement included use of test bank items and materials; training on how to do quality tests, use of data, and the essential elements of a lesson plan; use of pacing guides; the *CIS (Communities in Schools)* team's tracking of student grades, absences, and assignments; and the *AVID* team *(Advancement Via Individual Determination)* using student data to guide interventions. Support from subject teachers, department heads and the principal was also cited.

Apart from the system's signing bonuses and assistance to teachers new to the area in finding a house, teachers said they were made to feel wanted, treated as "one of the staff," that camaraderie existed and that the school culture was not competitive. New teachers were assigned mentors, and experienced teachers new to the school received "buddies." There was a new teacher support group, especially for certification issues. Teachers had opportunities to get training they need; retired teachers assisted new teachers in using VOCATS; and new teachers observed good teachers. For orientation purposes, the school ran a first day schedule for teachers.

Parent Involvement

Seven parents served on the school improvement team, and 250 parents are members of the PTSA. Parents provided support for the booster clubs for band and athletics, served as volunteers, and assisted with the annual barbecue that functioned as a community reunion. They also attended open house, parent seminars on financial aid, and helped in administration of testing and mailings. Area churches provided support and businesses contributed gifts for awards. The local fire department assisted in stuffing envelopes for mailings.

Curriculum and Instruction

Since the principal worked at all levels, he stated that understanding the writing process and the role of each subject is important. Specific practices noted include vertical teaming, doing item analysis, giving the same tests across the grade level, subject area meetings, departmental meetings, and teachers looking at curriculum alignment and sharing lessons and strategies once a month. Also, high school teachers talked with junior high teachers. To ensure broad-based curriculum competency, the principal required that the Algebra II teachers have taught Algebra I and Geometry.

Teachers focused on the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* and grade with the same rigor as the state. Curriculum alignment was seen as critical; test bank questions were used as lesson warm-ups; and there are drills in some subject areas. One class used a five-question warm-up, while the ELP class used review games such as ELP Bingo and Jeopardy. Students were given several assignments, trained in test-taking skills, and went through a week of reviews towards the end of the semester. In biology, there was a ten-day end of year review. *Learning Star* across the curriculum was a program used in the school.

End-of-course grades were counted as 25% of the students' final grades. For exceptional children and limited English proficient students, the school's strategy was early identification in August. In addition, regular teachers consulted with the Exceptional Children's department, received lists of student modifications, practiced inclusion in instruction, and collaborated with the special populations coordinator in school.

Strategies used with limited English proficient students included peer sharing, small-group work, additional time during and after school, and use of graphic organizers in instruction.

Apart from the school's setting increased expectations for all, regular evaluating, reteaching and retesting, and curricula alignment begun since 1992 were seen as effective in enhancing student achievement. Other strategies used include identifying struggling students after the first quarter; project-based work; differentiated instruction; quarterly assessments; giving the test until students get 100 % correct; Algebra 1 recovery classes on Saturday; use of computer programs such as *Algebra 1 Tutor, PLATO,* and *Broderbund* tutorials. In ELP, an enrichment file cabinet was used by high-functioning students. The school also had an ELP research lab, extra credit work, after-school and Saturday ELP classes, reading aloud and focus on vocabulary.

The school restructured its remediation approach, moving from the summer school model to after-school remediation on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays (teachers are paid; classes go from 2:30-4:30 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and for four hours on Saturdays). Also, a student could redo English in the first semester on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The BED students had modifications, access to counselors and a behavior modification teacher on campus. Mainstreaming and inclusion were practiced when appropriate.

Recognizing that ninth graders had difficulties handling the high school coursework, for Level I and II students, the school had a "freshman academy" program. This has two strands. One involved students attending "double blocked" classes (90 minutes) every day in English and "Freshman Focus" with emphasis on reading, comprehension, note-taking, and organizational skills. In the other strand, Level I and II students take "Introduction to Math". After they passed the competency test, they can proceed to Algebra I. The ELP and physical sciences teachers collaborated with the English and math academy teachers to ensure some content integration.

From October to May, after-school tutorials were available two times a week with transportation provided. There was an attendance recovery program in which students could make up a maximum of 4 days of absences. Some teachers stayed and provided help, and the library was open early at 6:30 a.m. and closed later at 3:30 p.m. to facilitate student use. After-school tutorials were provided to help students meet the computer competency requirement.

In the vocational area, Level III and IV students were encouraged to take higher-level programming classes. There are hands-on, open-ended projects in biology, and Algebra I, II and calculus challenge students to higher achievement. One great opportunity for Level III and IV students was the large number of AP courses available at this school. The school offered 16 AP courses with 314 enrollments in AP classes. The school hoped to become an AP School of Choice within the Mecklenburg system.

The non-tested subjects were funded equally, but tested subjects received additional resources. Curriculum integration was encouraged between the tested and non-tested areas.

The many opportunities available for teachers to work and collaborate included subject meetings, departmental meetings once or twice a month, monthly faculty meetings, informal meetings, and one meeting a month for the Comer process (new teachers are trained at these meetings).

Central office support consisted of instructional support materials, information on instructional alignment, access to an area superintendent, testing information, timelines information, textbooks and a technical person to help with computer problems

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

To help parents understand the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* and the Student Accountability Standards, the school sent materials home, gave information at PTA and publicized the standards in the local newspaper.

Closing the Achievement Gap

This school uses the *Brazosport A+* model that emphasized "plan-do-reteach."

The school offered an *Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID).* This elective taught inquiry, collaboration and writing and provided enrichment, instruction in test-taking skills, tutors and college visits for students.

Teachers attended at-risk seminars, assessment seminars, motivational seminars, special population trainings, and the school system ran sessions for each subject area in the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* and classroom management sessions.

In some classes, students proofread each other's work. In ELP students were exposed to current events and focus was given to vocabulary. Teachers followed the "test-reteach-retest" process, and some teachers were available to students at lunch.

Professional Development

Professional development focused on diversity and at-risk training, classroom management training, collegial support, how to use block time effectively and cooperative learning.

For follow-up to professional development, teachers shared with others. When they returned to school, they attended follow-up sessions on the topic, reflected on what could be done differently as a result of the professional development, or sometimes a teacher was be required to show a product—a test, report or documentation of application. Follow-up activities included workbooks, a phone contact, or an Internet site to be consulted.

School Climate

This school adopted the philosophy that no student has the right to keep another student from learning. As part of its school climate goal, teachers went over rules at the start of the school year by directly teaching the student handbook in four parts. The four blocks were used the first two days, and then students were tested on the contents of the handbook.

The school had a safe school plan, a student services management team, dropout prevention staff, and one police officer on site. One assistant principal had specific responsibilities for discipline, and group counseling was available for bereavement or drug problems.

To maintain student control, students stayed in one area at lunch instead of being allowed to roam the large, open. Teachers were assigned hall-monitoring duties including changes between classes. The school had over 40 security cameras. The major discipline problems in the school were student tardiness and fighting.

The high achievement orientation of this school was entrenched in this school's expectation of becoming an Advanced Placement (AP) school of choice within the Mecklenburg system. Given the current supportive school culture, this school will continue to enjoy continuous improvement in high student achievement.

WEST STANLY HIGH SCHOOL

16686 NC Highway 24/27
Oakboro, North Carolina 28129-9449
704.485.3012

Stanly County Schools
Jeffrey Moss, Superintendent
Mr. Larry Smith, Principal

Demographic Data for the 1999-2000 School Year

Locality	Rural
Grade span at the school	9-12
Number of certified staff members	60
Number of classified staff members	10
Number of lateral entry staff members	7
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	1:25
Student attendance rate	96.0%
Attendance rate of faculty	96.0%
Number of teachers new to the school last year	6
Teacher turnover tate	3%

Student Population

Grade	Total Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students
9	297	African-American	38	4.0%
10	251	Asian	2	.2%
11	212	Caucasian	886	93.9%
12	184	Hispanic	13	1.4%
		Native American	3	.3%
		Other	2	.2%

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Free/Reduced Lunch	72	7.6%

Faculty information

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
African-American	2	3.3%
Asian		
Caucasian	57	95.0%
Hispanic	1	1.7%
Native American		
Other		

	0-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Faculty Years of Experience	10	5	10	14	21

Positions of School Improvement Team Members

Cultural arts teacher	Math teacher
Counselor	Parent
One English teacher	Principal
Two Exceptional children teachers	Science teacher
Health/Physical Education teacher	Social studies teacher
Workforce development teacher	Teacher Assistant

Leadership

The principal was assigned to West Stanly High School at the beginning of the 1999-2000 school year. The principal had, however, been assistant principal for twelve years at this school prior to his most current assignment (except for two years at other schools). The principal saw the role of the principal as setting the tone for the school, setting high expectations for students and faculty, providing the instructional focus, setting the vision, providing resources, and ensuring a safe and orderly environment.

At West Stanly High School, the faculty and staff were empowered to make decisions. This was accomplished through the school improvement team (SIT) and the departmental teams that advised the SIT.

The principal provided assistance to ensure that the school continued to be a high-performing school: providing teachers the authority to make decisions, instituting *Thinking Maps*. The training required teachers to implement the strategies, focus on differentiated instruction using teachers as trainers, provide in-service on test results, and provide training on block scheduling to ensure that all staff were knowledgeable of this format.

Parent Involvement

There was strong parental support at West Stanly High School. Each year students, teachers and parents each signed a *Student Accountability Agreement* that addressed the responsibilities of each and ensured a focus on high academic achievement. Parents and students also signed the Code of Student Conduct that outlined the Stanly County Schools' policies on student conduct.

Parents were welcome at the school, and the community had a tradition of supporting high expectations. There was no organized PTA/PTO, but there were numerous booster clubs - athletics, band, and the arts (the West Stanly Players). Parents also volunteered and participated in field trips.

Curriculum and Instruction

The number of Advanced Placement and Honors courses increased in the last few years. This helped offer a more rigorous curriculum and better prepared students for college. An after-school tutorial program was added that was offered the three weeks before end-of- course tests. This allowed all students an opportunity to review for the end-of-course tests.

Periodic review of progress was important. One method involved three-week progress reports that students received. This ensured that student progress was monitored on a regular basis and that interventions were available if needed.

Common planning times and departmental meetings offered opportunities for sharing. Department chairs were an integral part of ensuring that instruction is focused and that staff was involved in the daily management of the school's instructional program. Department chairs received input from teachers and shared this in school improvement team meetings.

Pacing guides had been developed and were used and monitored on a regular basis. The *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* was the central focus of the school's instructional program.

Two areas of focus at West Stanly High School were writing across the curriculum and reading comprehension. The school hired a teacher with an exceptional children's background to work in small groups with students who had problems with reading comprehension. All of this, coupled with the tutoring program, ensured that students were prepared to be successful.

Understanding and Preparing for the Student Accountability Standards

The principal and counselors met in the spring with students from each of the five schools that feed into West Stanly High School. One of the topics discussed was the Student Accountability Standards. A packet was being prepared that was mailed to freshmen with the first nine-week report card.

The freshmen orientation was also used as a means of sharing Student Accountability Standards information.

The school used the personalized education plan (PEP) format that had been developed for all of the schools in Stanly County. The central office conducted training in November to ensure that everyone understood how PEPs would be implemented.

Closing the Achievement Gap

West Stanly population was not very diverse, with 94% of the student population being Caucasian. The percentage of minority students was 6% and the percentage of students participating in the free and reduced lunch program was 7.6%.

West Stanly had the services of teacher for limited English proficient students for 90 minutes each day. A Spanish teacher hired through the Visiting International Faculty Program also work one period a day with students experiencing the most difficulty. The availability of the tutoring program and the focus on writing across the curriculum and reading comprehension provided opportunities for all students to succeed.

Professional Development

Teachers were very positive regarding the opportunities available to them. Some of the professional development was done in house using West Stanly faculty, e.g., differentiated instruction. The central office was very involved, especially with its efforts on behalf of new and lateral entry teachers.

Fifteen of the teachers at West Stanly were certified mentors so there was a support system in place for new teachers.

Stanly County had a strong mentoring program for new and lateral entry teachers called *Project Using Skills Effectively (USE). Project USE* was a central office initiative that provided all new teachers with regularly scheduled training opportunities during the year.

School Climate

There was a high level of pride at West Stanly that was linked to an expectation that the school worked to be the best high school in Stanly County and the state. This expectation permeated the school and the community.

Forty-five of the sixty teachers at West Stanly had at least ten years of experience, so there was a high level of stability. The expectation of high student achievement and the commitment of the faculty and staff were very evident.

This school focused on prevention of problems. Each student received a *Code of Student Conduct* that was published by the county as well as the *West Stanly High School Handbook*. The faculty noted that the principal was very much a "students' principal." Each teacher also sent home his/her specific classroom rules.

Students signed to acknowledge that they received the *West Stanly High School Handbook* and that they would abide by the rules, regulations, policies and information in the *Handbook*. Parents and students also signed the *Code of Student Conduct* that outlined the Stanly County Schools' policies on student conduct.

The school also celebrated its successes. For example, each teacher received a sweater in the school's colors and there was a dinner to honor teachers.

The principal sent out information on how classes were to be set up, rules, procedures, interventions, and grading systems, to ensure that everyone was on the same page. The principal also met with students at the beginning of each year to share his and the school's expectations. All of this ensured that the focus on high expectations was clearly understood by all.

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